

HOME RULE;

OR,

IRELAND & HER NATIVE PARLIAMENT

FROM

THE REVOLUTION OF 1688 TILL

THE UNION ACT OF 1800.

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IRISH 1798 COLLECTION

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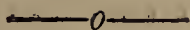
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The following sheets comprise a series of Articles entitled "HOME RULE," which have lately appeared in "CATHOLIC OPINION," and are now reprinted at the urgent desire of many friends.

IRELAND AND HER NATIVE PARLIAMENT



CHAPTER I.

“There is probably no other nation of the civilized world which, if the task of governing Ireland had happened to devolve on it, would not have shown itself more capable of that work than England has hitherto done.”—JOHN STUART MILL.

IN the following pages we purpose to give a history of that Act by which the Parliament of Ireland was transferred to Great Britain at the beginning of the present century; and, in order to do so effectually, we shall, in as brief a *résumé* as possible, state the relations which subsisted between the two Parliaments of England and Ireland from the time of the Revolution, that great event, momentous for England, disastrous for Ireland, by which the succession was changed, and the foundations of English liberty secured on the present basis. We shall do so with temper and moderation, and with a due regard to the consideration of Imperial interests; and we have such confidence in the love of justice which is planted in the mind of every true-born Englishman, and that innate sense which prompts him to reject and disown with scorn and indignation every act of wrong-doing which has been perpetrated in his name, however long-standing the iniquity, that we honestly believe if the truth-loving, injustice-hating people of this country were ever once thoroughly conscious of the circumstances under which, and the means by which, the Act of Union was carried, they would disavow the whole iniquity in the face of the world, and set themselves strenuously to undo its evil consequences by demanding, in tones that no Minister dare refuse to listen to, the total and absolute repeal of such an odious enactment.

An Act of Parliament is, no doubt, a solemn instrument or transaction, brought about by much labour, and ratified by the highest authority known to the Constitution. But it is of the very essence of that Constitution that the same legislature which passed the law should also have the power to rescind it, whenever the interests of the State and the well-being of the people demand its repeal. This is such a simple and elementary truism that it requires only to be stated to be at once acknowledged; and yet, if one were to judge from the assertions put forward by some of our public writers, it would seem as if there were an insuperable bar to any change being made in the laws of England, as if the reply of the barons to the prelates at Merton—*Nolumus leges Angliæ mutare*—and which was only directed against the introduction of the canon law in regard to legitimising children by the subsequent marriage of their parents, were to apply in all cases, and for all times.

Assuming, therefore, that it is within the competence of Parliament at any time to undo the evils of past legislation by reversing the policy of its predecessors, when experience shall have proved the expediency and wisdom of such a course, we propose here to discuss the question of repealing an Act of Parliament which was purposely introduced in a time of terror, and carried by the most flagitious means by which the liberties of a people could be annihilated. We do not speak rashly or unadvisedly, for the Union was proposed and carried while the *Habeas Corpus* Act was suspended; while military law was still in force; immediately after the suppression of a rebellion which was fostered and encouraged by the Government for this very purpose, a fact of which there is undoubted record, as we shall show hereafter; and while the people of Ireland were generally so harassed and intimidated that public opinion was stifled, and the English rulers had full swing to "work their wantonness in form of law." And as to the means by which it was carried, it is on record that "the union was accomplished by the most open, base, and profligate corruption that ever yet stained the annals of any country." In a public manifesto put forward in 1840, by the Repeal Association, and signed by O'Connell, the following statement was made, based upon solid fact, which has never been denied or controverted:—

"The leading feature, after all, in the Union was the daring profligacy of the corruption by which it was carried. It was reduced into a regular system. It was avowed in the House. It was acted on everywhere. The minister set about purchasing votes; he opened office with full hands; the peerage was part of his stock in trade, and he made some two scores of peers in exchange for Union votes. The episcopal bench was brought into market, and ten or twelve bishoprics were trucked for Union votes. The bench of justice became a commodity, and one chief justice and eight *puisne* judges and barons ascended the bench as the price of votes for the Union. It would extend beyond our calculation to make out a list of generals, and admirals, and colonels, and navy captains, and other navy and military promotions which rewarded personal or kindred votes for the Union."

This universal corruption has often been made the groundwork of the most strenuous endeavours on the part of English writers to prove the worthlessness of the Irish Parliament, and the smallness of the loss sustained by its removal. But this argument comes with a bad grace from those who profited by the corruption; and we are inclined to doubt whether, in an ethical point of view, on a comparison between the corrupter and the corrupted, the former would not be held the guiltier of the two. But, at any rate, the Irish Parliament, however corrupt, had the one merit, which no other could possess, viz., *that it was Irish*; and, during the period of its short-lived independence, and when it was under the influence of the public opinion of the country, the unexampled progress which Ireland made in everything that constitutes the glory and prosperity of a nation was the most unerring proof of its necessity and use, and of the wise and able system of legislation which it inaugurated. If the extensive corruption which prevailed were held to be a plea for deprivation, and for the surrender of a people's rights and liberties, we wonder what reply would be made if such a reason were put forward with a demand from France for the transfer of the English Parliament to Paris?

But the truth is, the Irish was not more corrupt than the English legislative body about the same period. Sir Robert Walpole, writing to

a friend respecting the Parliament of his day, says : “ There is scarcely a member whose price I do not know to a sixpence, and whose very soul almost I could not purchase at the first offer.” Whether this was mere cynicism, or truth, there can be little doubt that it conveyed the general opinion of the actual condition of public honesty in his time. This may have been the origin of another famous saying attributed to Walpole, that “ every man has his price,” which, whether uttered or not, was universally received as a political truism in those corrupt times. It should be remembered, however, that Reform had not yet come, and that popular representation was then unknown even in England. By the removal of the Parliament to this country, the wholesome influence of public opinion and patriotic spirit was entirely lost; the slavish, selfish, venal members were rendered wholly subservient to the English minister, and for long periods independent of, or insensible to, Irish wants and wishes. Granted, that the Irish Parliament did not carry Catholic Emancipation; still, soon after the era of Independence, measures began to be introduced for the relief of the Catholics; and who can doubt that, if the Government had not destroyed it, the Irish legislature would have swept away, long before 1829, every vestige of the penal laws; whilst the Imperial Parliament—although the British Minister was bound by an honourable understanding (not, indeed, written down on parchment) to give immediate relief—took more than a quarter of a century to get over the bigotry of the national prejudices, and redeem the pledges of a solemn engagement made by the agents of Pitt, but so cleverly and adroitly managed that, when the time came for the expected fulfilment, the compact was broken, because the bond could not be produced.

And yet, so patent is the special aptitude of England to legislate for Ireland, and so much gratitude is expected for the beneficent dispositions of English rulers towards their subjects across the water, and so gracious is the much vaunted magnanimity with which our statesmen devote so many days and nights of every session to Irish affairs, that it would be scarcely credited, if it were not a lamentable fact, that it has taken seventy years since the Union—which was to bring peace and plenty and never-failing prosperity—to adjust the Land question, even on its present unsatisfactory basis, and to undo the gross iniquity of maintaining the hostile Church of a paltry minority at the expense, and in opposition to the wishes, of the great majority of the Irish people. But the Imperial Parliament is to be arraigned not only for what it did *not* do, with all its powers and opportunities, but likewise for the long series of repressive and crushing enactments which it passed—so tardy and reluctant in acts of conciliation, and so hasty and eager in passing coercion bills and suspending the *Habeas Corpus*—Royal Commissions terminating in fruitless reports, and all the elaborate machinery of delay being set in motion to prevent any measure of real good for the country from being adopted, if at all unpleasant to English prejudices, or supposed to be adverse to English interests; whilst even the solemn repose of the Sabbath has been broken, in our own day, to expedite the passing of some Insurrection Act, or some other measure suspending the constitutional rights, and goading the feelings of the majority of the people of Ireland. The most paltry excuse was deemed sufficient, not very long ago, to exonerate a Minister from carrying out a policy of conciliation and justice, because of some dreadful coronation oath upon the throne, or some sinister influence behind it; whilst even those who were better disposed yielded their judgments and their

good wishes to popular clamour, through fear of the danger of rousing the latent bigotry of Exeter Hall, or perhaps risking their places by provoking the hostility of the once all-powerful "country party."

CHAPTER II.

"You may make the Union binding as a law; but you cannot make it obligatory on conscience."—SAURIN.

THE Union between England and Ireland, although a mere parchment Act, is still binding as long as it remains unrepealed on the Statute Book. Saurin, who was afterwards Attorney-General of Ireland for more than twenty years, and who refused the office of Lord Chief Justice, declared in the Irish House of Commons, "You may make the Union binding as a law; but you cannot make it obligatory on conscience." But, if the good sense, and honourable spirit, and manly independence of the people of England were once roused to a full knowledge of the circumstances under which, and the iniquitous means by which, that act was carried, we feel assured that they would fling aside all selfish prejudices, and take the earliest opportunity of undoing a great national wrong, by restoring to the people of Ireland that domestic Parliament, of which they were so unjustly deprived, and without which, we are firmly convinced, there can never be a peaceful solution of "the Irish Difficulty."

Full seventy years of hopeless, helpless, driftless legislation on one side, and intermittent disaffection and distrust on the other—occasional and fitful gleams of sunshine, invariably broken by stormy outbursts and dangerous mutterings of ill-suppressed hate—have passed away; and still the halcyon days of peace are as far off as ever. The blessings promised in 1800 have not come in all those baleful years up to 1872. Why is it so? If an English Prime Minister were ever to divest himself of the narrow insular prejudices of his position, and the pressing claims of his party, and if he were determined to work out the destinies of the empire from a truly Imperial stand point, we honestly believe he would be the first to acknowledge, in reply to that question, that the Act of Union is the perennial spring of disunion between the two countries; and that to win the affections of the warm-hearted, generous people of Ireland would be an accomplishment of the highest statesmanship, and would place England on a pinnacle of strength and security, from which she might look down, calmly and without trepidation, on the turmoil and disorders, which now agitate the political world, and shake the foundations of the oldest kingdoms.

The history of the Union carries with it its own condemnation. To enlighten those who are ignorant of its origin, and who cannot, therefore, fairly estimate its natural results, nor understand the undying hatred of the Irish people towards it, we shall trace it to its source, and follow it out through its consequences, in a brief, but we hope not uninteresting, narrative of the facts. To do so, we shall have to go back a little.

The Revolution of 1688, whatever political benefits it may have brought to England, was fraught with nothing but disasters for

Ireland. At the termination of the Civil War by the surrender of Limerick on 3rd October, 1691, the Protestant ascendancy, which had been rudely shaken by the events of the brief but unfortunate reign of James II., was completely re-established, and the Irish Catholics, that is, the Irish people, were laid prostrate in the dust. The terrible horrors of the penal laws—that “unparalleled code of oppression”—were enacted. “Their declared object,” says Burke, “was to reduce the Catholics of Ireland to a miserable populace, without property, without estimation, without education. They divided the nation into two distinct bodies, without common interest, sympathy, or connection. One of these bodies was to possess all the franchises, all the property, all the education; the other was to be composed of drawers of water and cutters of turf for them.”

The Protestants, therefore, considered themselves, and were considered in England likewise, as exclusively constituting the Irish nation; whilst the Catholic population was looked upon merely as an unavoidable evil in the land, stripped of all political privileges, and objects of the most unmitigated hatred and contempt. But, notwithstanding the complete establishment of the Protestant power, and the English interest, England had not the slightest idea of treating Ireland as an integral part of the empire. The policy of England towards Ireland was invariably selfish, intolerant, and tyrannical. The principle upon which Irish affairs were conducted was, not to consider what would be beneficial to Ireland, but what would be profitable to English commerce, and advantageous to English interests alone; whilst successive confiscations placed the proprietorship of the greater part of the soil of Ireland in the hands of English adventurers and hungry Dutchmen. In his celebrated speech on the Union, Lord Clare, referring to this period, stated: “The Parliament of England seems to have considered the permanent debility of Ireland as their best security for her connection with the British Crown; and the Irish Parliament to have rested the security of the colony upon maintaining a perpetual and impassable barrier against the ancient inhabitants of the country.”

But, with the utter prostration of the native Catholic Irish, there was a corresponding elevation of the English colony, who retained much of the sturdy independence of the mother country; and, although England had been accustomed to treat Ireland as a conquered and dependant province, and for a long period asserted the supremacy of the English over the Irish Parliament, there was a strong feeling gradually gaining ground in the Irish House of Commons that this supremacy was an usurpation, and an encroachment on the liberties of the Irish Parliament, which should have sooner or later to be resisted and overturned. It is true, that by the statute passed at Drogheda in 1494 by Sir Edward Poynings, the Lord Deputy of Henry VII., and called after him Poynings' Act, it was enacted that no Parliament should be held in Ireland until the Chief Governor and Council had first certified to the King, under the Great Seal, the causes and considerations, as well as the Acts they designed to pass; that the same should be affirmed by the king and council in England, and his license to summon a Parliament be obtained under the Great Seal of England. By this Act the English Privy Council got the power to alter or suppress anything emanating from the Irish Parliament, which was thus deprived of the power to originate, alter, or amend.

But the jealousy of Irish trade, on the part of English manufacturers, and the prohibition to export wool and woollen fabrics from Ireland,

created a feeling of hostility in that country, which soon led to something like an open rupture between the two legislatures, and ultimately terminated in the complete overthrow and abeyance of Irish legislative independence for a long time.

In 1698, however, William Molyneux, member for the University of Dublin, the friend of Locke, whose principles of Government he cordially embraced, seeing that the woollen trade was in danger of extinction—unhappily too prophetic—from the oppressive regulations adopted by the English Government, boldly raised the question of independence in his famous “Case of Ireland’s being bound by Acts of Parliament in England stated.” This celebrated tract, although dedicated to the king—William III.—with the strongest expressions of the most devoted loyalty, in discussing the question, “How far the Parliament of England may think it reasonable to intermeddle with the affairs of Ireland, and bind us up by laws made in their House”—repudiated *in toto* the right of England to legislate for Ireland, and maintained the independence of the latter in this respect with such a powerful display of legal argument and historical research, that it was hailed in Ireland with unbounded applause; whilst it was received in England, as might be expected, with vehement indignation. Indeed, so enraged and exasperated was the English House of Commons, that they passed a resolution condemning the book to be burned by the common hangman, the usual resource of defeated tyranny. In an address to the king they besought him to restrain the Irish Parliament, and on their part pledged themselves to assist him in maintaining the dependence and subordination of Ireland to the imperial crown of England.

The short-lived reign of Anne, which lasted only from 1702 till 1714, was too much occupied in general with framing and enforcing the worst portions of the atrocious penal code—such as the savage Act, “for preventing the further growth of Popery”—to pay much attention to political rights; and too deeply engaged with the French war and Continental politics, to care much about Irish affairs. Even the idea of a Union, which was then suggested for the first time by certain friends of the Crown, was treated with something like contempt. A Committee of the Irish peers, reporting on the state of the nation in 1703, resolved “that a representation should be laid before the Queen to induce her to promote such a union with England as might qualify the states of that kingdom (Ireland) to be represented in the Parliament, there.” From the coldness with which the Queen received the proposal, however, it is plain, according to Lord Clare, that her ministers would not listen to the proposition of a union with England.

It would seem to be the fatal destiny of England never to know the right time to catch the breeze of popular sentiment in Ireland, or to be able to avail of the golden opportunity which has often presented itself, in the long period of their connection, for winning the good will, if not the affections, of her people. The Education question, which is now coming to the front, is another of those rare chances of conciliating Irish opinion, and meeting the wants and wishes of the time. Will it be met boldly and generously? We fear not. There will be the same struggle to make Irish demands, however just, chime in with English prejudices, however irrational; and then the usual results will follow. And when some compromise has taken place, the time for gratitude will have passed. Ireland is not satisfied, because she has been made to feel that the boon was granted to fear, and not to favour;

whilst England has again missed her chance, and is disappointed accordingly.

But to return. Early in the reign of George I. there arose an altercation, in a question of privilege arising out of a point of appellate jurisdiction, which brought to the test once more the whole subject of the relations between the two countries. A decree of the Court of Exchequer in Ireland, the functionaries of which were English, both in their origin and in their sympathies, having been reversed by the Irish House of Lords, whose judgment was in turn reversed by the House of Lords in England on appeal, the Irish peers denied the legality of the appeal to England at all, alleging that an appeal to the King in his Irish Parliament was definitive and final in any cause in Ireland. But the English legislature, in the most peremptory and high-handed fashion, passed the arbitrary act known as the 6th of George I., which recites: "That whereas attempts have been lately made to shake off the subjection unto, and dependance upon, the Imperial Crown of this realm, &c., &c., it is declared and enacted that the said kingdom of Ireland had been, is, and of right ought to be, subordinate unto, and dependant upon, the Imperial Crown of Great Britain; and that the King's Majesty, by and with the consent of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, had, hath, and of right ought to have full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the people of the Kingdom of Ireland."

Thus was Ireland despoiled of her natural, just, hereditary rights by a stroke of the pen, and the Irish Parliament degraded to the rank of a provincial debating society by an Act of national robbery and spoliation. A day of reckoning, however, was approaching, although slowly, and without bringing its full results for many a long, sad year afterwards. It came, at last, as we shall see. But it was not till Irishmen had learnt from adversity the grand political lesson that it is *only by a true and cordial union amongst the people themselves* that any nation can ever hope to be great, prosperous, and free.

CHAPTER III.

"The weakness of England made the strength of Ireland. When England conquered, Ireland was coerced; when she was defeated, Ireland was relieved."—GRATTAN.

THE year 1724 may be called the turning-point in the history of modern Ireland; when, rousing from the lethargy of subjection, she began to awake to a new sense of life and independence. In that memorable year Swift, the immortal "Drapier," penned his famous letters, the real object of which, although ostensibly written to excite the country against Wood's patent for a copper coinage, and addressed "To the tradesmen, shopkeepers, farmers, and country people in general of the kingdom of Ireland" was, like his previous proposals for the use of Irish manufactures, to rouse the nation from its torpor, and to assert the independence of Ireland. In his fourth letter, turning aside from Wood and his base project, the "Drapier" discusses the question of liberty in the highest strain of patriotic fervour. "I have looked over all the English and Irish statutes," he says, "without finding any

Act that makes Ireland depend upon England, any more than England doth upon Ireland. We have indeed obliged ourselves to have the same king with them, and, consequently, they are obliged to have the same king with us. For the law was made by our own Parliament ;* and our ancestors then were not such fools (whatever they were in the preceding reign) to bring themselves under I know not what dependance, which is now talked of without any ground of law, reason, or common sense." Continuing this subject in the same manly tone, he says—"It is true, indeed, that, within the memory of man, the Parliaments of England have sometimes assumed the power of binding this kingdom by laws enacted there; wherein they were at first openly opposed (as far as truth, reason, and justice are capable of opposing), by the famous Mr. Molyneux, an English gentleman born here, as well as by several of the greatest patriots and best Whigs in England; but the love and torrent of power prevailed. Indeed, the arguments on both sides were invincible. For, in reason, all Government, without the consent of the governed, is the very definition of slavery. But, in fact, eleven men well armed will certainly subdue one single man in his shirt. But I have done; for those who have used power to cramp liberty, have gone so far as to resent even the liberty of complaining, although a man upon the rack was never known to be refused the liberty of roaring as loud as he thought fit." How powerful was this kind of argument in those days, and how singularly applicable even in the present time, we will leave our readers to determine. But it was this very letter, against which the Lord-Lieutenant (Carteret) and Council issued a proclamation, offering three hundred pounds for the discovery of the author, and for which the printer was tried before Chief Justice Whitshed. But the jury would not find the bill, nor would any person discover the author. Well might the minions of Government have sought every means for the destruction of a writer, who tells his readers in the same letter, "The remedy is wholly in your hands, and, therefore, I have digressed a little in order to refresh and continue that spirit so seasonably raised amongst you; and to let you see that, by the laws of God, of nature, of nations, and of your own country, you are, and ought to be, as free a people as your brethren in England." In some spirited verses addressed to the citizens of Dublin, and published shortly afterwards with the "Drapier's" initials (when the bill against the printer was to be presented to the Grand Jury), alluding to the charge that he had "gone too far" in leaving the discussion of Wood's project to treat of the alleged dependance of Ireland, there occurs the following stirring appeal to their own interests, as well as to their patriotism :—

"If, then, oppression has not quite subdued
At once your prudence and your gratitude—
If you yourselves conspire not your undoing,
And don't deserve, and won't bring down your ruin—
If yet to virtue you have some pretence,
If yet you are not lost to common sense,
Assist your patriots in your own defence;
That stupid cant, "he went too far," despise,
And know that to be brave is to be wise;
Think how he struggled for your liberty,
And give him freedom while yourselves are free."

To the memory of Swift, then, it is due to say that, when Ireland was sunk into the most abject state of slavery and dependance on England,

* He alludes to the statute made in Ireland in the 33rd year of Henry VIII., by which it was ordained that the king and his successors are to be Kings Imperial of this realm, as united and knit to the Imperial Crown of England.

he alone had the courage to reassert the principle previously proclaimed by Molyneux, who, in his turn, shared the sentiments of his friend Locke, whose noble treatise on Government in 1689 established the true standard of all legitimate power. After treating of the natural liberty of man, this great writer and recognized authority lays down this principle—"The liberty of man, in society, is to be under no other legislative power but that established by consent in the Commonwealth; nor under the dominion of any will, or restraint of any law, but what that legislature shall enact, according to the trust put in it."

For nearly twenty years, however, it was the cruel fate of Ireland to be at the mercy of Primate Boulter, Archbishop of Armagh, who had the full control of the administration of Irish affairs, and whose sole idea, as evinced through the whole series of his published letters, was to govern the country by means of an English (in opposition to an Irish) interest. He saw, with the wicked sagacity of a Machiavelli, that, if ever there should grow up and exist a real union amongst Irishmen of all creeds and classes, there would be an end to English domination; and hence his crafty policy was to keep the nation divided. Writing about the tendency of the "Drapier's letters," to unite the people, "The worst of it is," he says, "that it tends to unite Protestant with Papist; and, whenever that happens, good-bye to the English interest in Ireland for ever." Would that Irishmen of the present day, pondering over such a sentence as this, would learn the depth of wisdom conveyed in the old Roman maxim, *fas est ab hoste doceri*, and then resolve to make the application.

But the rebellion in Scotland in 1745, and the defeat of the English at Fontenoy, chiefly by the bravery of the Irish Brigade in the service of France, led to some relaxation of the hard grip with which the English Government held Ireland. The Earl of Chesterfield was sent over specially in the autumn of that year, with full instructions to soften some of the asperities of English rule. This new policy he carried out so effectually, that he soon became universally popular. "His short administration," as Plowden observes, "furnishes reflections highly important to the welfare of the Irish nation. It was a practical demonstration of the utility of a system of lenity and liberality, not only to Ireland but to the whole British empire. It was a conclusive evidence that Great Britain well knew how at any time to ensure the happiness of her sister kingdom, though unwilling at most times to promote it. The danger of Great Britain drove her to do justice to Ireland for the few months during which that danger lasted; and her security brought with it repentance, at the momentary, though necessary interruption, of the ancient system. It is lamentably remarkable how thriftily Great Britain dealt out this transient justice to Ireland, as if she counted reluctantly the hours of its enjoyment. On the 19th of August, 1745, the standard of rebellion was formally erected in the highlands of Scotland; a courier was despatched to hasten the return of the king, who was then in Hanover; he arrived in London before the end of the month, and on 31st day of August the Earl of Chesterfield was appointed Lord-Lieutenant and Chief Governor of the Kingdom of Ireland. On the 16th of April, 1746, the defeat of the Pretender at Culloden by the Duke of Cumberland put an end to the rebellion, and on the ninth day after that event Ireland was deprived of her favourite viceroy; for on the 25th of April, 1746, Primate Hoadley, Lord Chancellor Newport, and Mr. Boyle, the Speaker of the House of Commons, were appointed Lord Justices, and vainly did Ireland sigh for the return of her short-

lived felicity ; Great Britain was out of danger ; and Ireland could securely be put again under its former *régime*."

Such, unfortunately, has ever been the short-sighted policy of this country towards Ireland. Need it be any subject of wonder, then, that Irishmen should have learned to distrust the friendly professions of English statesmen, and to look for selfish motives in every winding and turning of the baneful system ? "Whatever it cost," wrote Charles I. to the Marquis of Ormond in 1645, when he wanted the aid of the Irish Catholics, "you are to make the best bargain you can, and not to discover your enlargement of power till you needs must ; and though I leave the management of this great and necessary work to you entirely, yet I cannot but tell you that, if the suspension of Poyning's Act, and the present taking off the penal laws against Papists by a law will do it, I shall not think it a hard bargain." If the pigeon-holes of the Chief Secretary's office in Dublin were turned out, and their contents examined, we wonder what sort of a "family likeness" would be found in the official instructions from England for the last two hundred years.

So true was the statement, in reference to later events of a similar character, made by Grattan in 1782—"The weakness of England made the strength of Ireland : for Ireland was saved when America was lost—when England conquered, Ireland was coerced—when she was defeated, Ireland was relieved." So true, also, was O'Connell's favourite maxim—"England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity"—that Emancipation was granted to fear, and not to love of Ireland. And, in our own day it is placed beyond controversy, in the memorable admission made a few years ago by the present Premier, that it was the spread of Fenianism, and the growing insecurity of English power in Ireland, which forced the Government to deal with the notorious grievances of Irishmen. It is a thrice-told tale, familiar to everybody now, that we owe to this not very magnanimous feeling on the part of our English governors the disestablishment of that "monster grievance" the Protestant Irish Church, and the recent, not wholly satisfactory, nor by any means final, settlement of the Land Question.

But, in order to complete our narrative, we must leave the comparatively tranquil and more hopeful reign of Victoria, and hark back again to the sad and dreary days of the Georges. Slowly, but steadily, the tide of public opinion, having once turned, began to advance ; and every obstacle raised to oppose its way but served the more to show the irresistible progress which was being made, and the height to which the flood was rising "As the English in Ireland," says Burke, in his famous letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, a member of the Irish Parliament, "began to be domiciliated, they began also to recollect that they had a country. The *English interest*, at first by faint and almost insensible degrees, but at length openly and avowedly, became an *independent Irish interest* ; full as independent as it could ever have been, if it had continued in the persons of the native Irish ; and it was maintained with more skill, and more consistency, than probably it would have been in theirs. With their views, the *Anglo-Irish* changed their maxims—it was necessary to demonstrate to the whole people, that there was something, at least, of a common interest, which was to become the object of common exertions. The mildness of Government produced the first relaxation towards the Irish ; the necessities, and, in part, too, the temper that predominated at this great change, produced the second and the most important of these relaxations. English

government, and Irish legislature, felt jointly the propriety of this measure. The Irish parliament and nation became independent."

CHAPTER IV.

"And bless the men of patriot pen,
Swift, Molyneux, and Lucas."

A FEW years before the death of Swift, which took place in 1745, another patriot, Dr. Charles Lucas, rose to the surface of Irish politics. Having been long distinguished for his sympathy with the people, and his outspoken adherence to the national cause, such as it was in those days, he was elected member for Dublin. His letters and public addresses exhibiting great powers of mind and a lofty spirit of independence, attracted the notice of the Government, and soon drew down on him their vengeance. Amongst other topics, he boldly discussed the several branches of the constitution; pointed out the privileges of Irishmen; and stated the various injuries they had sustained by the interference of the British legislature.

The Government determined to crush him in the usual fashion, as O'Connell was treated one hundred years afterwards; certain obnoxious passages, garbled from his publications, were made the foundation of a charge which was brought against him before Parliament; and, to their everlasting disgrace, the majority of the Commons, whose rights and privileges he had vindicated and upheld in a free and manly spirit, lent their sanction to his being prosecuted by the Attorney-General of the day. But Lucas, to escape the danger, fled the country. He did not, however, remain long in banishment; and he was again, when a new vacancy occurred, elected one of the representatives of Dublin. To the last, he maintained the same bold patriotic principles; but it is a stain on his reputation as a Christian, and a slur on his judgment as a politician, that he was unfavourable to any privileges being extended to the Catholics. In this he blindly followed the narrow-minded intolerance of that period. In other respects, he was far in advance of his age; and helped to plant in the minds of his countrymen the germs of an ardent longing for civil freedom and a fearless spirit of constitutional independence, which afterwards, although it took long to ripen fully, bore good fruit for the country. A "patriot party," however, soon began to be formed in the Irish House of Commons.

In 1753, the Duke of Dorset, the Lord-Lieutenant, at the opening of the Session informed the Commons that he was commanded by his Majesty to inform them that he "would graciously consent and recommend it to them" that certain balances remaining in the Treasury should be applied to the discharge of the national debt. The Commons in their address omitted the word "consent," and the committee who drew up the bill, instead of inserting the usual fulsome compliments, in the preamble mentioned nothing but a plain recital of the facts. This was highly resented by Stone, the primate. A contest ensued, in which great heat and spirit were displayed on both sides, and the bill was rejected in the Commons by a majority of five; in consequence of which several of the prominent patriots, who were servants of the Crown, were immediately dismissed from office. At these violent proceedings the

whole nation took fire. According to Plowden, the degraded members, exalted by their disgrace, became the idols of the people, and were honoured as martyrs for the liberties of their country. In this contest for constitutional rights, the patriots were headed by the Earl of Kildare, who presented with his own hand a spirited memorial to the King.

Towards the close of George II.'s reign, the idea of a Union began again to be mooted ; but was so entirely opposed to the general wishes of the nation, that in 1759 the populace of Dublin assembled in great multitudes, broke into the House of Lords, insulted the peers, seated an old woman on the throne, and searched for the journals with a view of burning them publicly. They even compelled the members of both Houses, whom they met in the streets, to take an oath that they would never consent to such a Union, or give any vote contrary to the true interest of Ireland. Most unconstitutional proceedings, it is true ; but it would have been well for Ireland, and better for the empire at large, if some such wholesome violence were applied to the Parliamentary hucksters of forty years later.

Early in the reign of George III., who succeeded to the throne in 1761, several important constitutional questions began to be discussed ; and amongst others, motions were introduced in the Irish House for shortening the duration of parliaments, which had hitherto been elected for the life of the King ; for rendering the judges independent of the Crown ; and for reducing the pension list, which latter had grown so excessive as to be felt an oppressive burden on the finances of the country. But the English minister was still powerful enough to defeat or retard these measures. In 1769 an insidious attack was made on the legislative powers of the Irish Parliament by the origination of a money bill in the Privy Council, contrary to former precedent and usage. A spirited opposition, however, was organised. The motion of the Government was negatived ; and it was resolved that such bill was rejected because it did not take its rise in the House. Such a proceeding incensed the castle magnates ; the lord-lieutenant (Townshend), came down to the House to close the Session, which he did in an audacious speech or protest against the vote and resolution, adding :—" And I do require the clerk of this House now to read my said protest, and to enter it in the journals of this House, that it may there remain to future ages as a vindication of the undoubted rights and authority of his Majesty and of the rights of the Crown of Great Britain in this particular."

The Commons, however, gave orders to the clerk that this speech should not be entered on their journals ; and there the matter ended for the time. But, at the opening of the next Session, an Address to the King having been agreed to by the Commons, in which his Majesty was thanked for continuing his Excellency Lord Townshend in the Government of the kingdom, a memorable circumstance occurred. The Right Hon. John Ponsonby, the speaker, in consequence of this, addressed a letter of resignation to the House, in which he stated, that " as such thanks seem to me to convey a censure of the proceedings, and a relinquishment of the privileges of the Commons, my respect to them must prevent my being the instrument of delivering such address, and therefore I request you may elect another speaker, who may not think such conduct inconsistent with his honour." Such an act of high-spirited patriotism ought to be registered in letters of gold, and imprinted for ever in the hearts of the people of Ireland. The obsequious

Commons, however, like miserable flunkies that they were, accepted the resignation, and proceeded to elect a more pliant tool of Government, in the person of Edward Sexton Pery, who was afterwards created Lord Pery. Not until it was too late did they learn, and rue, the full consequences of such false-hearted subserviency.

The accumulating load of the public debt, caused by the augmentation of the army, and the increased expenditure of the pension list, together with the illiberal restrictions on commerce, created soon afterwards a feeling of discontent and dissatisfaction, which threatened the worst consequences to the Government.

About this time the American troubles were fast ripening, and England, despite the warnings of her wisest and best friends, was helplessly drifting into that inglorious civil war, by which she ultimately lost her great colony for ever; and such was the generally disturbed state of the British empire at that period, that it needed the most enlightened statesmanship, and a courageous disregard of the ancient system of high-handed domination, to preserve her power and station in the world. England has passed through other trying phases of her history since then; but her wealth and her powerful, although expensive, allies helped her to maintain her high position; and Ireland proved to be a most fertile nursery-ground for supplying the wants of the battle-field. In the face of the new weapons of warfare, however, and the enormous legions now ready to start up at the call of continental despots, England's military prestige is no longer what it was; and, if ever another great crisis comes, in which all her energies will be required to be put forth, and all her resources strained to the utmost, it will behove her statesmen to leave no dangerous position in her rear unprotected. Ireland is no longer what she was in the days of England's last great struggle. The present state of the continent, and of the political world generally, is not such as to encourage much hope of security or stability, or anything like lasting confidence in the maintenance of the present ominous quietude, which seems only like the calm that follows the past, and precedes the coming storm. May English statesmen be wise enough in their generation to prepare in time for the evil day! And may Ireland, through kind and conciliatory legislation, and by a disposition on the part of her rulers to judge of her wants rather through Irish sympathies than English prejudices, be found a safe bulwark, with her back to the West; and not a source of weakness, waiting with open arms to receive any foe that promises liberation, in the supreme hour of trial! We love Ireland too well, and value England's protection far too dearly, not to long for the day, when both countries shall become cordially united in one interest, under one Crown. Unhappily, there is no such union now; nor will there be while the Parchment-Union lasts.

CHAPTER V.

"England has sown her laws like dragons' teeth, and they have sprung up armed men."
—WALTER HUSSEY BURGH.

ANY sketch of Ireland, however brief or rapid, at the period of her resurrection to which we have now arrived, would be not only incomplete, but unjust to a great memory, if it did not render homage to Henry Flood. A patriot of no mean stamp, a statesman of considerable experience in the management of public affairs, and a consummate

master of party tactics, he was the leader for a long time of a real Parliamentary opposition ; and by the patriotic fervour of his harangues, in a period of lengthened, and almost hopeless prostration of the national spirit, he helped to sustain the popular cause, and to prepare the way for the advent and triumph of his friend, and subsequent rival, Grattan. Having accepted place, however, under the administration of Lord Harcourt in 1775, the "official silence" imposed on him tended much to lessen his influence as a patriot, and he ceased to lead any party in the Irish House of Commons, at a time, too, when great events were near at hand. In that year Grattan entered Parliament, and by the sheer force of his genius, the novel grandeur of his eloquence, and the fervid energy of his patriotism, soon distanced all competitors in the parliamentary arena. In that memorable year, too, began the American War ; and it is extraordinary, and full of the deepest meaning for Irishmen of the present time, as it was of that day, with what significant alacrity the remonstrances from Ireland were listened to by the Government. As the war progressed, the restrictions on Irish trade began to be discussed. In March, 1778, the Lord - Lieutenant, Earl of Buckinghamshire, delivered a message from the King to the Parliament, announcing that "a treaty of amity and commerce had been signed between the Court of France and certain persons employed by his Majesty's revolted subjects in North America"; in consequence of which war was declared, and Spain having at the same time formed an alliance with France, affairs began to look gloomy enough for England. We do not write in any vindictive spirit, but desiring only to touch lightly on the records of those times for the purpose of refreshing the memory of such events ; and as history is said to be "philosophy teaching by example," to try if we cannot make the past in some measure profitable to the present and the future. In this momentous crisis of England's destinies, Irish affairs began to receive redoubled attention. Proposals were submitted for the relief of the Catholics ; for the encouragement of the fisheries—which might suggest awkward reflections to the present Prime Minister—also for the advancement of trade ; for the improvement of waste lands, and such measures. When the Bills for the commercial relief of Ireland, however, were to be read a second time in the British House of Commons, several members for English trading towns violently opposed them, and the table of the House was literally covered with petitions against any extension of commercial advantages to Ireland, by which the trade of Great Britain should be in any manner affected. So violent, indeed, was popular clamour in Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, and other places, that the inhabitants publicly threatened to be no longer loyal if these bills should pass, although supported by Burke and some of the most eminent statesmen of the time. The bills were accordingly rejected.

By the jealous and abominable system thus adopted, Ireland in 1779 was fast approaching to national bankruptcy. Her commerce had dwindled away ; her manufactures were nearly extinguished. In every struggle of the Irish Parliament to stimulate the trade of the country, the British monopolists interfered ; and the jealousy of the smallest manufacturing town in Great Britain was powerful enough to prevent the adoption of any measure, however beneficial, or hopeful for the prosperity of Ireland.

Writing of that miserable period, in his "Commercial Restraints," the Hon. Hely Hutchinson, Provost of Dublin University, states :—
 "The present state of Ireland teems with every circumstance of national

poverty. Whatever the land produces is greatly reduced in its value ; the merchant justly complains that his business is at a stand ; that he cannot discount his bills ; and neither money nor paper circulates. In this and the last year about twenty thousand manufacturers in this metropolis have been reduced to beggary for want of employment. They were for a considerable time supported by alms. Almost every branch of the revenue has fallen. A militia law passed in the last session could not be carried into execution for want of money. Our distress and poverty are of the utmost notoriety. The proof does not solely depend upon calculation or estimate : it is palpable in every public and private transaction, and deeply felt amongst all orders of our people. And this," he adds, "has been the consequence of the laws which prevent trade and discourage manufactures."

So disgusted were the people of Ireland generally with the selfish policy of English trade, and the ruinous results of the system adopted towards them, that associations began to be formed ; public meetings were convened by the high sheriffs of Dublin, and other civic functionaries, in the principal towns throughout Ireland ; and solemn engagements were entered into against the importation of British commodities, and for the encouragement and support of Irish manufactures. And as the country was drained of troops for the wars abroad, and the Chief governor declared himself unable to afford any effectual assistance, the people of Ireland resolved to defend themselves. Volunteer corps began to be enrolled in every part of the kingdom. Their formation was approved and sanctioned by the Government, and Parliament bore testimony to the valuable services rendered by these patriotic guardians, in votes of thanks to the several volunteer corps "*for their spirited exertions at this time, so necessary in defence of the country.*"

Such was the state of affairs when the Irish Parliament met on 12th October, 1779. The Lord Lieutenant made the usual vague discourse about the Royal cares and solicitude for the distresses of the kingdom, and the "common interests of all his people." When the usual slavish address to the Throne was proposed, Grattan, who had already distinguished himself as a public speaker, moved an amendment, declaring "That the natural support of our country has decayed, and our manufacturers are dying for want. Famine stalks hand in hand with hopeless wretchedness ; and the only means left to support the expiring trade of this miserable part of your Majesty's dominions is to open a free export trade, and let your Irish subjects enjoy their natural birthright." This amendment was the immediate occasion of one of the most memorable episodes in the history of that time. Hussey Burgh, the Prime Serjeant, rising from the Treasury Bench, declared he "would never support any Government in fraudulently concealing from the king the rights of his people ; that the high office which he possessed could hold no competition with his principles and his conscience ; and he should consider the relinquishment of his gown only as a just sacrifice upon the altar of his country." As a substitute for Grattan's amendment he proposed—"That it is not by temporary expedients, but by a free trade alone, that this nation is now to be saved from impending ruin."

The effect of such a speech, from such a man, and from a person in his high position, was electrical. This amendment passed unanimously amidst joy and exultation, which soon spread beyond the walls of Parliament, and "Free Trade" became at once the watchword of the nation. To impress the British nation still more with the determina-

tion of Ireland to obtain an extension of commercial rights, the Irish House of Commons spiritedly resolved to grant the supply for a short period only, and accordingly agreed to a six months' money bill; and this being backed by the meetings of the volunteers, with men like the Duke of Leinster and the Earl of Charlemont at their head, and the significant motto "Free Trade or ——" affixed on the mouth of their cannon, awakened the Government to a lively sense of the wrongs of Ireland. The Minister now thought it expedient to yield to the claims of the country; and at the close of 1779 measures for the relief of the Irish import and export trade were introduced into the British Parliament and speedily passed into law; such an excellent quickener of the stolid English official mind the Irish proceedings proved to be. The same old story over again: Ireland found she had wrung the accomplishment of her desires from England's weakness, and, knowing that she owed none of this to goodwill or friendship, or the smallest anxiety for her prosperity, she felt no transports of gratitude for favours so reluctantly conferred, or rights so unwillingly conceded; while the facility with which Irishmen saw their demands obtained in the time of England's need but stimulated them the more to seek the redress of older wrongs, and turn their attention to higher aims.

CHAPTER VI.

"That there is no body of men competent to make laws to bind this nation, except the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland."—DECLARATION OF IRISH RIGHTS.

WE are now approaching a period when events began to thicken, and the proceedings in the Irish Parliament became more and more significant, from day to day, of the crisis which was near at hand. Hence, our narrative has necessarily run more into the details of history; but we trust the sketch, imperfect as it is, will be found to have been a fitting prelude to the great act of the drama which will shortly open. On 19th April, 1780; public opinion being ripe, and the nation full of expectancy, Grattan made his first celebrated speech, when proposing the "Declaration of Irish Rights." Addressing the speaker, he said: "I have entreated an attendance this day that you might, in the most public manner, deny the claim of the British Parliament to make laws for Ireland, and with one voice lift up your hands against it." He boldly attacked the statute of William III., which destroyed the woollen trade; vehemently denounced the arbitrary act of George I., which subjected the Irish Parliament to that of England; and declared—"If I had lived when these acts were passed, I should have made a covenant with my own conscience to seize the first moment of rescuing my country from the ignominy of such acts of power." Then, in lofty tones, which found a responsive echo in the newly-awakened patriotism of the House, he made a stirring personal appeal to the members: "Your ancestors," he said, "who sat within these walls, lost to Ireland trade and liberty. You, by the assistance of the people, have recovered trade—you still owe the kingdom liberty. She calls upon you to restore it." With scornful irony he swept away every argument that might be suggested in favour of the bad old system, and anticipating the reproach of ingratitude, often used then by the creatures of Government, as well as now, he said, with manly independence, "I know of no species of

gratitude which should prevent my country from being free ; no gratitude which should oblige Ireland to be the slave of England." This should be the answer of every true Irishman to-day to this same kind of reproach, now so freely bestowed by those who think Ireland ought to be happy and thankful, because England is prosperous and repentant ; in other words, that the country should submit tamely to national extinction for the sake of an empire of whose wealth they are not participators, and in whose glory they can feel no paramount interest.

The political sagacity contained in the following extract from the same speech, is as true to-day as when he uttered it : " As anything less than liberty is inadequate to Ireland, so is it dangerous to Great Britain. We are too near the British nation ; we are too conversant with her history ; we are too much fired with her example, to be anything less than her equal ; anything less we should be her bitterest enemies—an enemy to that power which smote us with her mace, and to that Constitution from whose blessings we were excluded." Again appealing to their patriotism, in language which ought to sink deep into the soul of every Irishman to-day, he exclaims : " Do not then tolerate a power—the power of the British Parliament over this land—which has no foundation in utility or necessity, or empire, or the laws of England, or the laws of Ireland, or the laws of nature, or the laws of God—do not suffer it to have a duration in your mind." Concluding his address in the same strain, Grattan moved : " That the King's Most Excellent Majesty, and the Lords and Commons of Ireland, are the only power competent to make laws to bind Ireland." He argued the whole question of Irish rights in a style of such surpassing eloquence, and with such impassioned grandeur of sentiment that his audience caught the fire of his enthusiasm, and, when his speech was published, a new spirit seemed to have been breathed into Ireland ; so that the charge which immediately passed over the face of the country was like a resurrection from the grave. But still the Minister of England was too powerful, or the Irish Parliament had not sufficiently grown out of its vassalage, and the motion was defeated by a majority of thirty-four members out of 232. Such a defeat, however, was only the prognostic of an early triumph. And the heart of Ireland now beat high with the hope of recovering her legislative independence. The volunteers, who in 1780 numbered 40,000, increased in two years to an army of 80,000 men—the élite of the nation. Early in 1782 public meetings were held in almost every part of Ireland, and resolutions were everywhere passed, expressive of a firm determination to establish her parliamentary rights on a lasting and constitutional basis. The grand juries of the several counties, and also the leading merchants and citizens generally, as well as the various volunteer corps, and finally, men of every class, adopted the same principles, and joined in the same measures : a common mutual feeling united the whole country. On the 15th February, 1782, a remarkable convention of the representatives of 143 corps of volunteers, of the province of Ulster, was held at Dungannon, and, as indicative of the general spirit of the times, it may be useful to note here some of the principal resolutions which were unanimously adopted on that occasion : " That a citizen by learning the use of arms does not abandon any of his civil rights." " That a claim of any body of men, other than the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, is unconstitutional, illegal, and a grievance." And after reciting various encroachments of the English Parliament

they further resolved : “ That it is our decided and unalterable determination to seek a redress of those grievances ; and we pledge ourselves to each other, and to our country, as freeholders, and fellow-citizens, and men of honour, that we will, at every ensuing election, support those only who have supported and will support us therein ; and that we will use all constitutional means to make such pursuit of redress speedy and effectual.”

It is gratifying, too, to notice that the first use they made of their liberty, as Protestants, was in favour of the Catholics—so true is it, that, when a spirit of patriotism is once roused in a nation, all sectarian antipathies are swept away ; and the mutual love of country embraces and binds together all those who are children of the same soil in one common feeling for the common good. If ever the day should come again—and may its glorious light soon dawn—when such a bond of brotherhood shall unite Irishmen of all creeds, and classes, and parties together, there is no power under heaven that could stand in the way of the attainment of their highest hopes and aspirations as a nation. “ Resolved that as men, and as Irishmen, as Christians, and as Protestants, we rejoice in the relaxation of the Penal Laws against our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects ; and that we conceive the measure to be fraught with the happiest consequences to the union and prosperity of the inhabitants of Ireland.” If the volunteers had no other victory but this to inscribe on their standards, it was a glorious triumph over ancient bigotry and prejudice, and a moral achievement worthy of the highest fame.

These proceedings were received with universal applause and approbation. The spirit of the Dungannon meeting was diffused throughout the whole kingdom ; and its resolutions were copied and adopted by every volunteer corps in Ireland. Such, indeed, was the enthusiasm of the times, that Grattan, who was gifted with a dauntless, daring soul, was again induced, a week after the meeting at Dungannon, to bring forward his motion on the rights of Ireland. His argument on this second occasion was more legal and less declamatory than on the former one. The question, as he now proclaimed, was not whether Ireland had a right to be free, but whether Great Britain had a right to enslave her ; and, after delivering a speech which seemed to have exhausted the subject, he again moved an address to the king :—“ To assure his Majesty that the people of this country are a free people ; that the crown of Ireland is an imperial crown, and the kingdom of Ireland a distinct kingdom with a Parliament of her own, the sole legislature thereof. To assure his Majesty that by our fundamental laws and franchises (laws and franchises which we, on the part of the nation, do claim as her birthright), the subjects of this kingdom cannot be bound, affected, or obliged by any Legislature, save only by the King, Lords, and Commons of this, his Majesty’s realm of Ireland ; nor is there any other body of men who have power or authority to make laws for the same. To assure his Majesty that next to our liberties, we value our connexion with Great Britain : on which, we conceive the happiness of both kingdoms intimately depends, and which, as it is our most sincere wish, so shall it be our principal study, to cultivate and render perpetual ; that under this impression, we cannot suggest any means whereby such connexion can be so much improved and strengthened, as by a renunciation of the British Parliament to make laws for Ireland—a claim, useless to England, cruel to Ireland, and without any foundation in law.”

Government again used all the means at its command to defeat the motion, and again succeeded, which, however, made Grattan's triumph, a little later on, only the more complete and successful. When Irishmen shall have again thrown off the the habits of serfdom, and learnt the manly sentiments of freemen, they will find in the public speeches and declarations of this period, the amplest and ablest materials for expressing in thoroughly loyal, legal, and constitutional language, the feelings, wants, and wishes of the entire people of Ireland.

CHAPTER VII.

"That the said right claimed by the people of Ireland, to be bound only by laws made by His Majesty and the Parliament of that Kingdom, in all cases whatever, shall be, and it is hereby declared to be established and ascertained for ever, and shall at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable."—23 Geo. III. Chap. 28.

THE spirit of the country was now raised to the most dangerous pitch of excitement. Public meetings were everywhere held, not only of the various volunteer corps, but also of other representative bodies, not partaking of the military character; and all unanimously adopted the sentiments of the Dungannon Delegates. At a meeting of the freemen and freeholders of Dublin, convened by the High Sheriffs of the city on the 19th of March, 1782, an address to their Parliamentary representatives, Sir Samuel Bradstreet, Recorder (afterwards one of the justices of the Court of Queen's Bench), and Travers Hartley, was agreed to, calling on them to assist in procuring an unequivocal declaration that "the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland are the only power competent to make laws to bind this country." In their replies both members specifically pledged themselves to endeavour to accomplish this object. A few weeks later, at a meeting of the High Sheriff and Grand Jury of the County of Dublin, the following resolutions were passed: "Resolved—That no power on earth but the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland can, in right, make laws to bind the people of this land. That the members of the House of Commons are the representatives of, and derive their power solely from, the people; and that a denial of this proposition would be to abdicate the representation." Accordingly, an address, embodying these resolutions was agreed to and presented to their representatives, Luke Gardiner (afterwards Lord Mountjoy) and Sir Edward Newenham, both of whom approved, and in their replies adopted the same. Other meetings of similar character, and all proclaiming the same principles, were held throughout the country; but we will notice only one more, because of its significance, for many reasons. At an assemblage of the electors of the University of Dublin (Trinity College), a high-spirited address was unanimously agreed to, and ordered to be presented to their representatives, Walter Burgh (afterwards Lord Chief Baron), and John Fitzgibbon, who was subsequently created Earl of Clare, and Lord Chancellor of Ireland. That address is too lengthy to insert here; but we may state that, amongst other constitutional doctrines laid down, the electoral body declared that "the power of binding Ireland by acts of a foreign legislature, is what nothing but a spirit of arrogance or oppression would insist upon, nothing but the most abject servility submit to. We therefore expect you will exert your most strenuous efforts to obtain a

declaration of the rights of Ireland ; a repeal or satisfactory explanation of the Law of Poynings' ; an act for making the tenure of the judges independent of the Crown ; and a repeal of the Perpetual Mutiny Bill." The concluding paragraph of this address is as true now as it was then, and as applicable in the advocacy of Home Rule in 1872, as in 1782, and, at the same time, affords a fitting answer to those who malignantly assert that a Domestic Parliament for Ireland means separation from England. "It is our wish," said this respectable body, as we say still, "to render the connection between this country and Great Britain, as close and permanent as possible, and we are persuaded that this is only to be accomplished by abolishing all usurped authority of the one over the other, and removing all invidious distinction between the constitutions of two countries, equally entitled to be free."

The public replies of both members to this address are well worthy of being recorded. Burgh, in his answer, said that when he reflected on his past Parliamentary conduct, it afforded him the highest satisfaction to find that it entirely corresponded with the tenor of their instructions ; whilst Fitzgibbon, without any reserve, declared in the most unequivocal language, "I have always been of opinion that the claim of the British Parliament to make laws for this country is a daring usurpation on the rights of a free people, and have uniformly asserted this opinion both in public and in private." Coming from such a source, this must be considered a remarkable declaration ; and though Fitzgibbon subsequently became a traitor to his country, and a renegade to his publicly-expressed principles, such an act of political tergiversation but renders all the more striking the significance of his sentiments, whilst he was still apparently uncorrupted. If the claim of the British Parliament to make laws for Ireland, was "a daring usurpation" in 1782, no honest mind can conceive how such a claim could become right or valid in 1800 ; unless by a process of reasoning, familiar only to knaves or dupes.

A change of ministry having taken place in England, early in 1782, the Duke of Portland arrived in Dublin on the 14th April, and in two days, such was the eagerness of Ministers to propitiate Ireland, a message was delivered to the Irish House of Commons by the Right Hon. Hely Hutchinson, Chief Secretary, recommending "such a final adjustment as might give mutual satisfaction to both kingdoms," to which the Chief Secretary added : "As to the right of this kingdom to be bound by no other laws but those made by the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, he had always asserted it from the seat of judicature as a judge, and in this House as a representative of the people." He then further declared that "whatever mode should be proposed for the declaration of this right, in terms the most unequivocal and explicit, whether by vote, address, or bill, should receive his strongest support, provided it contained such sentiments of duty and loyalty to the King, and affection to our fellow-subjects of Great Britain, as every man in this nation felt." Thereupon, Grattan moved, for the third time—viz., on the memorable 16th April, 1782—the Declaration of Rights, which was carried with enthusiastic unanimity, and received with acclamation throughout the country. An address to the King was then agreed to : one paragraph of which is worth quoting, if only for the purpose of exhibiting the spirit of the time.

"To assure his Majesty that his subjects of Ireland are a 'free people' ; that the Crown of Ireland is an Imperial Crown, inseparably

annexed to the Crown of Great Britain, on which connection the interests and happiness of both nations essentially depend; but that the kingdom of Ireland is a distinct kingdom, with a Parliament of her own, the sole legislature thereof; that there is no body of men competent to make laws to bind this nation, except the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland; nor any other Parliament which hath any authority or power, of any sort whatsoever, in this country, save only the Parliament of Ireland. To assure his Majesty that we humbly conceive that in this right the very essence of our liberties exists; a right which we, on the part of all the people of Ireland, do claim as their birthright, and which we cannot yield but with our lives."

On the 27th May following, the Duke of Portland communicated the reply of the British Prime Minister in the name of the Crown, unconditionally complying with the demand of the Irish Parliament and people, and stating "that the British legislature had concurred in a resolution to remove the causes of their discontents and jealousies, and were united in a desire 'to gratify every wish' expressed in their late addresses to the Throne." And he added that these benevolent intentions of his Majesty, and the willingness of his Parliament of Great Britain to second his gracious purposes, were unaccompanied by any stipulation or condition whatever.

The reply of the Irish Parliament to such a message was couched in dignified terms of grateful acknowledgment; an address being moved by Grattan: "To assure his Majesty that we conceive the resolution for an unqualified, unconditional repeal of the 6th George I. to be a measure of consummate wisdom and justice, suitable to the dignity and eminence of both nations, exalting the character of both, and furnishing a perpetual pledge of amity. That gratified in those particulars, we do assure his Majesty that no constitutional question between the two nations will any longer exist which can interrupt their harmony; and that Great Britain, as she has approved of our firmness, so she may rely on our affection. That we remember and do repeat our determination to stand and fall with the British nation."

The British Parliament now proceeded to repeal the English statute, commonly called the Declaratory Act of the 6th of George I. The statute by which this Act was repealed partly runs thus: "Whereas an Act was passed in the 6th year of the reign of his late Majesty, King George the First, entitled an Act for the better securing the dependency of the kingdom of Ireland upon the crown of Great Britain, may it please your Most Excellent Majesty that it be enacted, and be it enacted, &c., &c., that the above-mentioned Act, and the several matters and things therein contained, shall be, and is, and are hereby repealed." Thus we see that England, without any loss of power or dignity, or any detriment whatever to her high position among nations, consented before now to *Repeal*, and, as statesmen value precedent, there should be no difficulty whatever in the way of her doing so again.

The unfortunate discussions which were raised by Flood and others as to the binding character of this *simple repeal*, as it was called, on the part of the English Parliament, laid the foundations for those pretensions which England treacherously put forward, seventeen years later, for undoing her one great act of grace towards Ireland, and inflicting on her a cruel wrong that has never ceased to rankle in the hearts of Irishmen—a perpetual irritating sore, for which there is but one cure. That remedy is to be found only in the restoration to Ireland of her native Parliament. The public faith of nations, as well as the

honour and safety of England demand it ; and the day is coming when it will be granted—let us hope not too late.

The Irish people not being perfectly satisfied about the repeal of the Declaratory Act, an address from the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, Commons, and citizens generally, was presented in March, 1783, by the Corporation of Dublin to Earl Temple, the new Lord Lieutenant, in which they anticipated his Excellency's "early attention to the removal of all doubts relative to the independency of the legislation and jurisdiction of the Parliament of Ireland." To which the following answer was returned : " I am too sensible to this address of affectionate regard to answer it in the common expressions of good will ; my heart is indeed too full ; I truly feel all honest pride in receiving such a testimony of the sense which the City of Dublin entertains of my zeal to promote that first object of my wishes, the constitutional and commercial freedom of Ireland."

The British Parliament now thought proper to put an end to all apprehension of future differences on this subject by passing an Act "for removing and preventing all doubts which had arisen, or might arise, concerning the exclusive right of the Parliament and Courts of Ireland in matters of legislation and judicature ; and for preventing any writ of error or appeal from any of his Majesty's Courts in the Kingdom of Great Britain," and it declared that this right was now established for *ever*, and should never again be questioned. "That the said right claimed by the people of Ireland, to be bound only by laws made by his Majesty and the Parliament of that kingdom, in all cases whatever, and to have all actions and suits at law or in equity, which may be instituted in that kingdom, decided in his Majesty's Courts therein finally, and without appeal from thence, *shall be, and it is hereby declared to be, established and ascertained for ever*, and shall at no time hereafter be *questioned or questionable*," (23 Geo. III. chap. 28). Thus was the triumph of Irish independence gained. And it is worthy of being recorded that the first Act which the Parliament passed on the recovery of its rights was to vote a sum of £100,000 to be applied towards raising 20,000 seamen for His Majesty's fleet. We believe in our heart that the same loyal spirit still exists, and that if English statesmen were wise enough now to raise Ireland once again to the dignity and freedom of a nation, England would find her account in the affectionate sympathies and willing support of a brave and generous people, instead of being weakened and straitened by the smouldering jealousy and ill-suppressed disaffection of an unhappy because dissatisfied province.

CHAPTER VIII.

"There is not a nation on the habitable globe which has advanced in cultivation and commerce, in agriculture and manufactures, with the same rapidity in the same period."—LORD CLARE in 1800.

WE have now passed in review an eventful period of Ireland's history. We have seen her beaten to the dust in the gloomy times of William, and of Anne. We have beheld her bruised and bleeding, but still occasionally holding up her head, in the melancholy days of the Georgian epoch. We have witnessed the various, but fitful struggles of her patriots for their country's deliverance from thralldom ; and we see her at last, in 1783, in full possession, however temporary and evanes-

cent, of those glorious blessings of liberty, for which she long had sighed, and sighed in vain. Like Grattan, we may say—although, of course, we use his honoured and venerated name in all humility—we have traced her progress from injuries to arms; from arms to liberty. Would to heaven that we could say, with him, “Spirit of Swift! spirit of Molyneux! your genius has prevailed! Ireland is now a nation; and bowing to her august presence I say *Esto perpetua!*”

We have thus, however, been particular in tracing through so many successive reigns, the generally disheartening story, which has, indeed, little to cheer or encourage the literary student who seeks in the persual of Irish history for the happy career of a nation from progress to progress. But there is still a grand moral lesson to be learnt from all this: That no matter what obstacles may arise; no matter what difficulties may be thrown in the way, either by faint-hearted friends, or by false-hearted foes; no matter what opposition may be aroused in those who only labour the harder, all the more they feel power slipping from their grasp; the resurrection of a country from political degradation is always near at hand whenever a spirit of unity begins to animate the people, and the mutual sympathy of a universal brotherhood draws and binds men together in a love of home and of their common country. This is the one great impressive moral which the history of Ireland from 1688 to 1782 inculcates.

The Catholics soon began to feel the benefits of independent native legislation; such a sure and steady barometer of public opinion is the action of Parliament when under the direct and immediate influence of popular feeling. Different acts were passed in their favour; but, unhappily, the old leaven of Protestant ascendancy still worked its evil way; and although the best friends of England and Ireland, at both sides of the Channel, laboured hard to give that relief which they foresaw would have to be granted sooner or later, still it was found too difficult to break down all at once the odious supremacy; the natural action of Parliament was still fettered by a hateful jealousy which prevented the Catholics from obtaining full relief before the unhappy rebellion was precipitated, which stopped all beneficial measures for a long time. Moreover, it must not be forgotten, that no sooner had the Irish Parliament been declared independent of the English Legislature, than it became evident that such independence was but a mockery so long as the Parliament itself was unreformed. Indeed, the necessity of reform became only the more glaringly evident on this account. Of the 300 members who composed the Irish House of Commons, more than a third were placemen and pensioners of the Government. The cry of Parliamentary Reform had already been raised in England; it found more than a responsive echo in Ireland. There was no real representation of the people; no representation of the actual property of the country; a great number of the members were the mere nominees of private individuals. Several of the constituencies did not number a dozen voters, and according to a statement made by Grattan, it would appear that about forty individuals returned a large majority of the House of Commons.

But, nevertheless, it was felt to be an *Irish* Parliament, influenced more or less by popular sympathies; and it is extraordinary how soon the country at large began to experience the advantages it had anticipated from the enjoyment of free trade, and from the unfettered action of the legislative powers of its independent Parliament; so much so, that only a few years elapsed when the most evident proofs of an un-

exampled recovery of political life and national prosperity were exhibited on all sides. The City of Dublin alone, improved by noble public buildings, thronged by native residents, and frequented by multitudes of foreigners, became the gayest and happiest metropolis in Europe; and, in itself, afforded a striking example of the general prosperity of the nation. Who can doubt that, if the Parliament were again restored, Dublin would become the healthy centre of the resuscitated national life, and that one of the crying evils of Ireland—absenteeism—would find an effectual cure? The country would ere long cease to be drained of its native genius, intellect, and material resources.

The wonderful progress made by Ireland during the sixteen years following 1782 is no mere figment of rhetorical exaggeration, but a fact so well authenticated that it is part and parcel of the history of that time. The removal of the restrictions on trade, and the moral elevation of the people created by the general feeling of nationhood, and the sense of dignity arising therefrom, imparted a new spirit to the entire country; so that the nation advanced rapidly in wealth, and all the arts of peace, industry, and civilisation. "There is not a nation on the habitable globe" was the admission of Lord Clare in 1800, "which has advanced in cultivation and commerce, in agriculture and manufactures, with the same rapidity in the same period." At a meeting of the bankers and merchants of the City of Dublin, held on 18th December, 1798, one of the resolutions proposed by W. Digges Latouche was as follows: "Resolved—That since the renunciation of the power of Great Britain, in the year 1782, to legislate for Ireland, the commerce and prosperity of this kingdom have eminently increased."

Another public meeting of the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, Commons, and citizens of Dublin, held on the preceeding day, passed the following resolution: "Resolved unanimously, that by the spirited exertions of the people and Parliament of this kingdom the trade and constitution thereof were settled on principles so liberal that the nation has risen ever since rapidly in wealth and consequence." A few years before this, Grattan had declared on the same subject: "The country is rising in prosperity. We prevailed. We on this side of the House, with the assistance of the people, got for the country a free trade and a free constitution. The consequence of our victory was that the country, free from restrictions, shot forth in prosperity and industry, not by the virtue of her present Ministers, but by her native vigour." And when the project of Union was under discussion, Foster, the Speaker of the House of Commons, in his speech in Committee, on the 17th February, 1800, said: "Can those who now hear me deny that, since the period of 1782, Ireland has risen in civilization, in wealth, and in manufactures, in a greater proportion, and with a more rapid progress, than any other country of Europe."

There was also a meeting of the Catholic body held at the Royal Exchange, Dublin, on 13th of January, 1800, to declare against the Union. Their testimony is valuable as a proof of the rebound made by the nation after the auspicious settlement of '82, whilst their apprehensions of the evils to follow from the treacherous overthrow of that solemn international compact have proved, alas! too truly, the accuracy of their forebodings. This meeting is also specially memorable for the circumstance that it was the immediate occasion of the first public appearance of O'Connell, who had been called to the bar in 1798. His speech on that occasion, and the resolutions prepared and proposed by him, and unanimously adopted, are the best vindication of the Roman

Catholics from the unfounded charge of having acquiesced in or supported the Union for their own special interests. It may be deemed desirable to put on record here some of the resolutions there adopted : “ Resolved, that we are of opinion that the proposed incorporate Union of the legislature of Great Britain and Ireland is, in fact, an extinction of the liberty of this country, which would be reduced to the abject condition of a country surrendered to the Minister and legislature of another country, to be bound by their absolute will, and taxed at their pleasure by laws, in the making of which this country would have no efficient participation whatever.” Their next resolution was : “ That we are of opinion that the improvement of Ireland for the last twenty years, so rapid beyond example, is to be ascribed wholly to the independency of our legislature, so gloriously asserted in the year 1782, by virtue of our Parliament co-operating with the generous recommendation of our most gracious and benevolent sovereign, and backed by the spirit of our people, and so solemnly ratified by both kingdoms as the only true and permanent foundation of Irish prosperity and British connection.” And it was further resolved, “ That we are of opinion that if that independency should ever be surrendered we must as readily relapse into our former depression and misery, and that Ireland must inevitably lose, with her liberty, all that she has acquired in wealth, and industry, and civilisation.” The dreary history of the connection for the last seventy years affords a melancholy confirmation of the foregoing statement, whilst the following resolution disproves the calumny industriously circulated at the time, and unwisely re-echoed by Sir Jonah Barrington, that the Catholic body supported the Union for the promise of Emancipation. “ Resolved, that having heretofore determined not to come forward any more in the distinct character of Catholics, but to consider our claims and our cause, not as those of a sect, but as involved in the general fate of our country, we now think it right, notwithstanding such determination, to publish the present resolutions, in order to undeceive our fellow subjects who may have been led to believe, by a *false representation*, that we are capable of giving any concurrence whatsoever to so foul and fatal a project ; to assure them we are incapable of sacrificing our common country to either pique or pretension ; and that we are of opinion that this deadly attack upon the nation is the great call of nature, of country, and posterity upon Irishmen of all descriptions and persuasions, to every constitutional and legal resistance ; and that we sacredly pledge ourselves to persevere in obedience to that call as long as we have life.” Such an expression of true patriotism deserves to be recorded, if only in vindication of a maligned body, some of whose titled “ leaders,” as they were called, allowed themselves to be entrapped by a wily Government, which first used, and then abandoned them. It is incontrovertible that, whilst the Catholics withheld the coveted sanction of their approval of the Union, the Minister who carried the iniquitous measure ostentatiously held out hopes of relief, as part of the promised blessings of his scheme, which he subsequently ignored, when the time came for fulfilment. Pitt may have been a “ heaven-born Minister ” for England, but he could not possibly have been a more diabolical enemy to Ireland, if his origin had risen from a very much lower source.

CHAPTER IX.

“ You acknowledge the Union (Society of United Irishmen) would have become stronger, but for the means taken to make it explode.”—Lord CASTLEREAGH on examination of Dr. MacNeven.

THE prosperity to which Ireland attained in such a remarkable degree, immediately after the glorious achievement of 1782, was, unfortunately, one of the principal causes which ultimately led to the overthrow of the country's independence. England was, at that time, above all things, a nation of manufacturers—“ shopkeepers” was Napoleon's contemptuous phrase—and every interest was made subsidiary to commerce. She was jealous of every rival; and, fearing that Ireland would prove a dangerous competitor, she determined to return to the old policy of crippling and overburdening Irish trade for the protection and benefit of the English manufacturer. Ireland seemed then, as was admitted on all hands, to have a future of great promise before her; and to be entering on a career of much power and splendour. English jealousy feared her growing power; English antipathy disliked her people; and English sectarianism hated her religion. The Monarch on his throne, and the Minister in the cabinet, reflected the national prejudices of their country. The loss of America had sunk deeply into the mind, and embittered the feelings of George III.; and from the moment the “ Renunciation Bill,” as it was called, had been passed, the King was impatient for a favourable opportunity to rescind it.

Pitt had resolved to recover for Great Britain the power she had surrendered, in her hour of weakness, to the Irish Parliament in its hour of strength. He planned the Union as his remedy, and with wicked intent he saw that national discord, terror, and confusion, were the most effectual elements for bringing about his purpose. This he accordingly carried out by the most unblushing system of intimidation, bribery, and corruption. The stand made by the volunteers; the overthrow of his taxation scheme in 1785 by the opposition given to his “ Commercial Propositions”; and the over-generous loyalty of the Irish House of Commons in 1789 on the Regency Question, excited his deadly enmity; and he determined thus early to crush that legislative independence, which encouraged the opposition in England, and inconveniently stood in his way. Resolutely, therefore, with cold-blooded disregard of high principle, did he set himself to carry out his project of annihilating the liberties of Ireland. Two congenial instruments he found to his hand in Lord Cornwallis, and Lord Castlereagh; the one an old military despot without much brains, and the other a youthful, intriguing diplomatist without any heart.

The first hint of the intention of the Government was thrown out as a feeler in 1798, in a pamphlet entitled. “ Arguments for and against a Union between Great Britain and Ireland considered.” Mr. Edward Cooke, the under secretary, generally got the credit of this plausible performance, but there can be little doubt that Lord Clare's was the head that furnished the ideas, although the under secretary's hand may have held the pen. The pamphlet was regarded as an official proclamation of the sentiments of the Government; and, being circulated with profuse industry throughout the whole country, produced a general warfare of the press. In a few months no less than thirty pamphlets appeared on the subject; and when the intentions of the Government were unequivocally known, the entire nation was stirred to its very centre. The year chosen was a sadly memorable one; when the

country had been maddened and goaded into a premature rebellion, artfully fomented by the agents of Pitt, as Grattan publicly declared, in order to prepare the way for carrying the Union. This measure, involving the unconditional subjection of Ireland, had long been meditated by the English Ministry, and there are ample documents to prove that in the viceroyalty of the Duke of Rutland the topic was frequently discussed by the council.

The growing distrust of Parliament, and the determination of the people to obtain Reform, led to the first organisation of the United Irishmen in 1791; but the opposition to any change was so decided, on the part of the administration, that disaffection spread rapidly throughout the country. Government fostered the hostile intentions of the people by the instigation of those ready agents of mischief, who spring up naturally and thrive under a corrupt and despotic administration. The spirit of revolution was accordingly stimulated and encouraged until, as Lord Castlereagh unwittingly blurted out, "Government made it explode." For nearly a twelvemonth they had in their pay one of the Colonels of the United Irishmen, who attended all their secret meetings, and regularly reported the proceedings to his highminded employers! They could have seized the whole of the leaders at any moment they chose, and so crushed the rebellion in its incipient stage; but they wickedly allowed it to go on until the people were driven mad by the most atrocious acts of inhuman barbarity that were ever perpetrated in any civilized country. We are here expressing only the sentiments of the leading men of that unhappy time. Our sympathies are not with revolution. We look back on all such insane attempts to obtain civil and religious liberty with the keenest anguish of sorrow; and we should regard with dismay and deep affliction of soul any criminal, because futile, project for recovering Irish independence by the cruel arbitrament of the sword. May God in His mercy avert such a calamity for evermore from Ireland! They are no true patriots, nor wise friends, nor real heroes, who encourage such a delusion. But history cannot be gainsaid or ignored, and it is a puerile and paltry affectation of delicacy which absolutely refuses at any time to raise the veil, and to recal the sad and bitter memories that rise up, like warning spirits, to remind us, and perhaps admonish us, of the past.

When Lord Clonmel, the Chief Justice, was dying he got his nephew, Dean Scott, to destroy his papers relating to the conduct of the Irish Government at the period of the disturbances in 1798. On the authority of the Dean, it is stated by Mr. Henry Grattan, in the life of his illustrious father, that one document in particular showed the duplicity of the Government, and proved that they might have crushed the conspiracy whenever they chose, and so prevented any outbreak, but that they let it proceed on purpose to carry their plot of the Union, and that this was their design. Lord Clonmel further added that he had gone to the Lord Lieutenant and told him that, as they knew of the proceedings of the disaffected, it was wrong to permit them to go on, and that the Government having it in their power, should crush them at once and prevent the insurrection. He got no encouragement, however, and after this he was not summoned to attend the Privy Council on business of State. This wicked design of the Government has been denounced over and over again, and always admitted, and is now a fact as notorious as any in history. The parliamentary debates of the period afford abundant evidence of it; whilst the recently published papers of Lords Castlereagh and Cornwallis leave no doubt whatever on the

subject. Sir Ralph Abercrombie, an experienced and upright soldier, who was appointed Commander in Chief in Ireland in Dec. 1797, soon became disgusted with the atrocious conduct of the soldiery, and the inhuman system he was sent to carry out. In Feb., 1798, he issued a general order in which he denounced the disgraceful irregularities of the military, proving the army to be in a state of licentiousness which rendered it, as he said, "formidable to everyone but the enemy." He was, therefore, soon recalled, and succeeded by a truculent and ruthless commander—General Lake—who sanctioned, if not encouraged, a regular system of coercion, terror, and torture. Life and property were now placed at the mercy of the basest informers; the abominable practice of "free quarters" was established; and the country was given up to the wicked licentiousness of a brutal soldiery; martial law was proclaimed; flogging, picketting, pitch-capping, and death were the regular sentences inflicted by a court-martial not unfrequently composed of three officers, of whom two were youths, and the third an officer of yeomanry who had rendered himself conspicuous in an Orange lodge for the open avowal of his hatred of the Catholic peasantry. What wonder need be felt if the country was thus goaded on to the madness of rebellion?

In a remarkable document drawn up by Grattan as a Petition to the King from the Irish Whig Club, the rebellion is clearly shown to be the result of the various acts of oppression and injustice on the part of the Government from 1792 to 1798, thus enumerated:—the dishonour brought on both Houses of Parliament so early as 1792 by the scandalously open and shamelessly avowed sale of the Peerage, to procure seats in the Commons for Government officials, destroyed the people's confidence in the Parliament; the unconstitutional nature of the Act 33, Geo. III., to prevent what were called unlawful assemblies of the people under pretence of preparing petitions or other addresses to the Crown or Parliament; the rigour of the Gunpowder and Conventions Bills in 1793; the persecution of the Catholic peasantry on the part of the Orangemen of the North, sanctioned and protected by a Bill of Indemnity; the suspension of the Habeas Corpus in 1797; the extreme severity of military government; Lord Carhampton's wholesale transportation of the people without trial or legal proof of guilt;* General Lake's "death-denouncing proclamation;" the "free quarters" in the country; the proscription of the Catholics, with the burning of their dwellings and of their chapels—and lastly, in a country where female chastity was always held in the highest respect, the licentiousness of a military rabble let loose upon the peasantry. In reference to this document, Madden, in his "Lives of the United Irishmen," says it is impossible to investigate the various topics therein treated of, without coming to the conclusion that "the Parliament was corrupted, and the people were dragooned for the especial purpose of promoting a rebellion which was to prove so destructive to the energies of the country as to enable the British Minister to accomplish his long-projected measure of the Union."

Pitt had now reduced Ireland to a state fitted to receive any act of despotism he wished to impose on her. In a letter to the *Courier* newspaper in Nov., 1798, Grattan sketched with the hand of a master, and with the intimate knowledge of one who tracked their steps in the whole of their tortuous and wicked policy, the entire course of the

* A young law student, a near relative of the writer, was so carried off, in spite of all remonstrance, and lost his life in Prussia when about returning home.

Government of Ireland from 1782 to 1798. The truth of the statement loses none of its caustic severity because of the epigrammatic polish of the sarcasm. "They opposed," he says, "the restoration of the Constitution of Ireland; they afterwards endeavoured to betray and undermine it. They introduced a system of corruption unknown in the annals of Parliament. . . . Having, by such proceedings, lost the affection of the people of Ireland, *they resorted to a system of coercion to support a system of corruption, which they closed by a system of torture, attendant on a conspiracy of which their crimes were the cause.*

The Rebellion commenced on 23rd May, 1798, and on the 22nd January, 1799, the Union was proposed. Whilst the loyalists were struggling through the lingering throes of an insurrection put down by the relentless ferocity of a savage yeomanry; whilst the surviving insurgents were artfully distracted between the hopes of mercy and the fears of vindictive punishment; whilst the Protestant, to use Plunket's expressive phrase, was "hallooed against the Catholic, and the Catholic against the Protestant;" whilst all legal protection to liberty or life was suspended; public opinion completely stifled; lawful meetings forcibly suppressed; the country reduced to a state of anarchy, and exposed to crimes and cruelties of unheard of character; at such a time of national dismay and confusion the Union was projected. Martial law being proclaimed, the courts of justice were closed except for civil causes. At such a moment, when the gaols were filled with unaccused victims, taken up merely on suspicion, and the scaffold was reeking with the blood of untried wretches; whilst numbers of respectable individuals were being seized and forcibly deported from the country without even the form or solemn mockery of a trial: this was the time selected and prepared by the British Minister for destroying the legislative independence of Ireland. As Plunket declared when the Union Act was first introduced, "I will be bold to say that licentious and impious France, in all the unrestrained excesses which anarchy and atheism have given birth to, has not committed a more insidious act against her enemy than is now attempted by the *professed* champion of civilized Europe against a friend and an ally in the hour of her calamity and distress—at a moment when our country is filled with British troops—when the loyal men of Ireland are fatigued with their exertions to put down rebellion; efforts in which they had succeeded before these troops arrived; whilst our Habeas Corpus Act is suspended; whilst trials by court-martial are carrying on in many parts of the kingdom; whilst the people are taught to think that they have no right to meet or to deliberate, and whilst the great body of them are so palsied by their fears, and worn down by their exertions, that even this vital question is scarcely able to rouse them from their lethargy, at the moment when we are distracted by domestic dissensions—dissensions artfully kept alive as the pretext for our present subjugation and the instrument of our future thralldom."

Is this the language of some needy hanger-on of Court, watching for place, and waiting to be purchased? Are these the sentiments of some briefless barrister, in a stuff gown, talking fustian and bombast in order that the price of his corruption may be enhanced according to the loudness of his tone and the violence of his language? No! but the ripe and solid arguments of one of the most massive and majestic intellects which the last century, in all its exuberant fecundity of great men, produced: one before whose logical force of reasoning, and

luminous power of illustration, the most splendid minds of the last generation bowed in homage and spell-bound admiration.

Men, who had heard all the great orators from Chatham to Burke, declared that Plunket had surpassed them all. His speech in the English Parliament in reply to Mackintosh is said to have saved the Ministry of that day; and on one occasion, in a debate on the Catholic Claims, he accomplished the almost miraculous feat of gaining six votes to his party by the sheer force of conviction. We shall have occasion to refer to this distinguished orator's sentiments on the Union before our task is completed; but we will conclude for the present with the solemn pledge he made before the world on the first night the Union was proposed, and which he never withdrew in all the height of his subsequent eminence and dignity as Lord Chancellor. He tells the Ministry that they will see every honest and independent man in Ireland rally round her constitution, and merge every other consideration in his opposition to the ungenerous and odious measure of the Union—"For my part," he exclaimed, "I will resist it to the last gasp of my existence, and with the last drop of my blood, and when I feel the hour of my dissolution approaching, I will, like the father of Hannibal, take my children to the altar, and swear them to eternal hostility against the invaders of their country's freedom." With such impressive examples as this, and with all the mournful evidence of the disastrous results of seventy years of trial, does anyone wonder now that Irishmen should still register in their hearts a vow of "eternal hostility" to this hateful Act, so fatal to the peace, and happiness, and prosperity of Ireland?

CHAPTER X.

"Can it ever be credited that an Union carried now was founded upon national consent."—
PETER BURROWES.

IRELAND, at the close of the year 1798, presented a melancholy spectacle to the world. The embers of a mad rebellion, to which the people had been purposely goaded, were being ruthlessly stamped out; terror reigned throughout the land; the Habeas Corpus Act suspended, and all the constitutional forms of law in abeyance; the sanguinary tribunals of courts-martial disposing of the lives and liberties of all who happened to come within the reach of suspicion; military law supreme; and human life at the mercy of wretches who knew not what the virtue of mercy was, or in whose breasts all humane instincts had been utterly stifled by the excesses of the times. The voice of the country scarcely dared to give expression to the national will. Public meetings of various counties, duly convened to deliberate on the projected measure of the Minister, were dispersed by military force, and all constitutional opposition was violently suppressed. Whilst the kingdom was thus held in terror and suspense, the intention of the Government was unequivocally declared; and though public discussion was only possible at the risk of being intimidated and put down by the official zeal of some extra-loyal functionary of despotic power, still some meetings were held, whose proceedings will enable us to judge what was the general sense of the nation. Amongst the first may be noticed a meeting of the Bar, held on 9th December, 1798. At that time, the Bar of Ireland held a prominent position in the eyes of the country. It was considered the

great avenue to parliamentary distinction and public preferment, and amongst its members there were generally to be found representatives of some of the leading families of the land. The eminent talents and high professional attainments of the body at that period lent additional weight to the importance of their opinions ; and the names of those who signed the requisition to call the meeting included men of such splendid abilities as Plunket, afterwards Lord Chancellor ; of Saurin, who was Attorney-General for twenty years, and who refused the office of Lord Chief Justice ; of Bushe, who subsequently filled that high office ; of Peter Burrowes, a great constitutional lawyer, and several other distinguished men. The authentic report of the debate which then took place lies open before us, and we wish we could feel at liberty to place the several speeches *in extenso* before our readers, as an expression of the voice of the country ; but our space forbids us to do more than to give a few extracts from the sentiments expressed by some of the leading speakers on that occasion. Saurin, who opened the discussion, proposed the following resolution :—“ Resolved, that the measure of a Legislative Union of this kingdom and Great Britain is an innovation which it would be highly dangerous and improper to propose at the present juncture of this country.” In the course of his remarks, he observed that it was the duty of every great body of men, and particularly the duty of the Bar, as learned in the law and Constitution, to step forward and declare their sense on the subject. “ In times of perfect tranquillity,” he said, “ it is their duty to do this ; but at such a period as the present, when the public are rendered incapable, by the circumstances in which they stand, of considering so momentous a question, it becomes the duty of the Bar to declare whether it is wise or safe at such a crisis to discuss it. . . . Was it not obvious to every man, that if, in case of a Legislative Union, Ireland should be suffered to send a hundred members to the united Parliament ; yet the Parliament thus constituted with five hundred British members, and one hundred Irish, must be influenced by every tie of inclination, and, I will add, of duty, too, to prefer the interests of Great Britain to those of Ireland, when they should be found to clash ? At all events, it was not at the termination of a rebellion, if it was indeed terminated, the most alarming and savage which had ever scourged a country, that a question of such magnitude was to be discussed ; it was not when a foreign army of 40,000 men were in the country, and military law scarcely yet suspended, that the people were to be asked on the moment, whether they would give up their Constitution, and transfer their legislative power to another country.” Mr. Spencer, who seconded the motion, said he heard it asserted that, from the great military force in the country, and the suppression of the public voice, that was the precise reason for the introduction of the measure, which could not be carried under any other circumstances. “ Good God, Sir ! ” he exclaimed, “ is it possible that such a sentiment should circulate, without circulating revolutionary principles along with it ? Can it be endured to be said, that the season for introducing the most momentous constitutional questions to the consideration of the legislature of a free people is, when there is an extraordinary military force in the country, and when, from the imperiousness of circumstances, the public lips have been closed.” Mr. Peter Burrowes, a man of great original genius and noble simplicity of character, a member of the Irish Parliament, and one of the ablest advocates of the Irish Bar, when that illustrious body was the representative of Irish wit, eloquence and patriotism, declared himself

unequivocally against the Union, in a speech of bold and manly assertion. "A legislative Union," he said, "with Great Britain, upon *any terms* which can be rationally conceived, is in its principle at all times inadmissible ; at the present juncture the measure is peculiarly pernicious. What is in truth and simplicity the question ? Whether the Irish nation should at all deliberate upon the terms and conditions upon which it should surrender a Constitution founded upon the soundest principles of human policy, which it has enjoyed for six centuries, and under which, with all its imperfections and abuses, it arrived at a state of great improvement, and was proceeding in a course of rapidly accelerating prosperity, until, in common with other countries, the political malady, which has of late afflicted the world, had visited it with evils *not ascribable to its Constitution ?* I say this nation ought not to entertain such a question. The discussion is certain degradation. The measure is certain ruin." After exposing the evils that were sure to follow the passing of such an act, and which have, alas ! but too surely followed, in confirmation of his predictions, this great lawyer proceeded : "I hasten to that which is the grand pretence for this alarming innovation. The security of the connection of Great Britain, it is said, requires it. This is, indeed, a powerful appeal. Connected as we are by so many ties to that great and powerful people, there are but few things which we ought not to sacrifice to the preservation of that connection. But let not our zeal mislead us. I assert, I hope without contradiction, that the security of that connection must depend *upon affection, and not force*. *Disaffection* is the only source of separation, and see whether, upon the whole, this measure be not more likely to extend than to restrain it." Then, discussing the question on the highest constitutional grounds, he asks the pertinent question—"Can it ever be credited that an Union carried now was founded upon national consent ? And if the contrary opinion should prevail how fatal would the consequence probably be ? How various are the impediments to popular discussion at present ? Do we forget that assemblies of the people are under temporary restraints, at least, regulations not heretofore deemed necessary in our Constitution ; that the Habeas Corpus Act is suspended ; that extraordinary powers are vested in magistrates ; that that undefinable monster, martial law, still exists in parts of Ireland ; that rebellion is but just subdued, and invasion still hovering round our coasts ; and, above all, that a numerous English army exists in this country. I assert that there cannot be a *free discussion* of the question under such circumstances. But even though it were possible to devise a system of Union which ought to be adopted, this is a juncture the most unfit for propounding or discussing it. I am no metaphysician in politics. I do not derive my opinion from mere abstract reasoning. Yet I hold it to be indisputably certain that the ancient established Constitution of a nation like this cannot be justifiably annihilated without the previous consent of the nation, founded upon the freest and fullest discussion of the subject." The report of Plunket's speech on this occasion is very meagre, and refers to it mostly in general terms, such as that he "very ably proved the extreme danger and impropriety of agitating the question of Union at such a time as the present. Should the administration, however, propose a Union now, he had no doubt but it would be carried. Fear, animosity, and want of time to consider coolly its consequences, and forty thousand British troops in Ireland, would carry the measure. But in a little time the people would awake, as from a dream, and what consequence would then follow he trembled to

think. For himself he declared he opposed an Union, principally because he was convinced it would accelerate a total separation of the two countries." Several other speakers followed in the same strain, but we will notice only one other speech—that of Mr. Goold, who uttered some bold and startling sentiments, which produced much sensation and hearty sympathy. After declaring against the Union in the strongest terms, he exclaimed, "I am enabled by the visible and unerring demonstrations of nature, to assert that Ireland was destined to be an independent nation. Our patent to be a state, and not a shire, comes direct from Heaven. The Almighty has, in majestic characters, signed the grand charter of our independence. The great Creator of the world has given unto our beloved country the gigantic outlines of a kingdom, and not the pigmy features of a province. God and Nature, I say, never intended that Ireland should be a province, and, by G—, she never shall!"

If such were the sentiments thus publicly expressed and loudly applauded, of a man of high legal acquirements, and who afterwards held a distinguished position on the Bench, it is evident that the general feelings of the nation must have been as violently opposed to such an odious measure, and that the Union can never be considered as the act of the people of Ireland. They have never acquiesced in it, or consented to it. They submitted to it as the householder does to the robber whose pistol is at his head; but with a just reservation of all rights for the recovery of the property when he is again restored to the full liberty of action and free will.

Having taken the opinion of the Bar of Ireland, let us see what were the sentiments of the representatives of Irish commerce on this most momentous question for the trade of the country. On the 18th Dec., 1798, a meeting of the bankers and merchants of the city of Dublin, at which the Lord Mayor presided, was held at the Mansion House, "for the purpose of taking into consideration the reported project of a legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland." The leading banker of the City, William Digges Latouche, proposed the following resolution amongst others:—"That we look with abhorrence upon any attempt to deprive the people of Ireland of their Parliament, and thereby of their Constitutional right, and immediate power to legislate for themselves."

The matured and cautious opinions of men holding such a stake in the country, and usually so averse from taking any steps in opposition to the ruling powers, are much more weighty, and deserving of consideration, than any mere rhetorical flights of the professional candidates for popular favour; and hence the public declarations of such a man are significant in the highest degree of the full sense and spirit of the whole country, and of the most absolute and conscientious conviction, on the part of the speaker. Let us hear how this influential and responsible individual treated the bare idea of a Union, then only promulgated as a rumour of the intentions of the Government. Addressing the Lord Mayor, he says, "My Lord, there is not in Ireland a man more attached to British connexion than I am, nor any man who would make a greater sacrifice to promote the benefit of Britain and the strength of the Empire. I would almost part with everything for this purpose, but our free and internal legislation. It is my attachment to British connexion that renders me averse to the measure of an Union, because I feel convinced that instead of strengthening the two countries, it would eventually cause their separation." Then, having ably exposed

the fallacy that the Union could be any advantage to Ireland, Mr. Latouche concludes with the following important and impressive statement:—"In the opinions I am here uttering before the bankers and merchants of Dublin, I am not sacrificing reason to prejudice, or general to partial interests. Although this city and its vicinage would be greatly and peculiarly injured by a Union; although the prospects of industry and honest speculation might be blasted by the adoption of such a measure, I would not, however, be one of those to oppose it, if beneficial to the country at large, or to the empire; but convinced as I am that it would be hurtful to us, I cannot, attached as I am to our present connection with it, allow an inference merely advantageous to the sister country; and I trust that if we were wantonly to favour a measure so injurious to ourselves, the people of England, when they should come to take the subject into consideration, would reject the measure, and humanely interpose between us and our criminal insanity. But, my Lord, I hope that the early and decided testimonies of public disapprobation which are directed against the measure will never suffer it to assume a more serious and confirmed form than at this moment; and as I look upon a separation of this kingdom and Great Britain as the greatest misfortune which could befall either country, so do I look upon their legislative Union as the most dangerous and impolitic idea which could possibly be indulged."

Another meeting, or Post Assembly, of the Lord Mayor, sheriffs, commons, and citizens generally of Dublin, was held on 17th December, at which the following resolution was passed:—"Resolved unanimously, that having boldly defended the Constitution, in King, Lords, and Commons, against the open and secret abettors of rebellion, we are determined steadily to oppose any attempt that may be made to surrender the free legislation of this kingdom by uniting with the legislature of Great Britain."

Such were the sentiments of the people of Ireland with regard to this hateful measure, from the very first moment that the project began to assume definite shape, and come under the notice of the public opinion of the country. Such were also the sentiments of the nation when the Act was subsequently forced through Parliament by the most odious and unconstitutional means. Such were the sentiments of the country after ten years of the disastrous results, which had been foretold, were passed. And such is the feeling existing in the heart of Ireland to-day, after the mournful experience of seventy years. English statesmen may fret and fume because Ireland refuses to be tranquil and submissive under English domination. All the tinkering legislation in the world to redress the grievances and right the wrongs of Ireland will work no permanent cure for the country's disorders, while the one great wrong—the cardinal iniquity of all—the Act by which Ireland was robbed of her legislative independence, remains unrepealed on the Statute Book.

CHAPTER XI.

"The Legislative cannot transfer the power of making laws to other hands: for it being but a delegated power from the people, they who have it cannot pass it over to others."—Locke on Civil Government.

WE have seen with what indignation and aversion the bare idea of the projected Union was received by the bar, the bankers and merchants, the Corporation, and highest civil functionaries, and by the people of

Ireland generally; for, notwithstanding that public meetings were violently suppressed in some places by the military, the proceedings in Dublin were imitated by the various corporations in the provinces, with the single, and by no means creditable, exception of Cork. Wherever the popular voice could be openly expressed with safety, there it was unmistakeably raised against the odious measure. Let us now see how the unbought representatives of the nation in Parliament treated the proposition when formally brought before them.

When Parliament met on 22nd January, 1799, the question of Union was only hinted at in vague terms in the speech from the Throne, under a general recommendation "to provide the most effectual means of consolidating into one firm and lasting fabric the strength, power, and resources of the British empire." In the House of Lords an interesting debate took place, on an amendment to the address being moved by Lord Powerscourt, in the following terms:—"That it is our most earnest desire to strengthen the connexion between the two countries by every possible means; but the measure of a legislative Union, we apprehend, is not within the limits of our power. We beg leave, also, to represent to your Majesty that, although this House were competent to adopt such a measure, we conceive that it would be highly impolitic so to do, as it would tend, in our opinion, more than any other cause, ultimately to a separation of this kingdom from that of Great Britain." This amendment, however, was lost, as was also another motion made by the Earl of Bellamont, guaranteeing "the permanent enjoyment, exercise, and tutelary vigilance of our resident and independent Parliament, as established, acknowledged, and recognised." On the rejection of which, a solemn protest was lodged by fourteen of the lords in the minority, headed by the Duke of Leinster.

In the House of Commons a much more determined stand was made on behalf of the country. The first debate lasted from five p.m. till one o'clock the following afternoon, when the Government carried their point by a majority of *one*! It was, indeed, a great misfortune for Ireland that Grattan, who had retired in disgust from Parliament in 1797, had not yet returned; although he subsequently reappeared at a later stage, to animate by his fervid genius, and rouse by his stirring eloquence, the depressed spirits and failing courage of his countrymen. But there were still some good and true men left; and on this occasion the cause of Ireland did not lack heroic defenders. On the motion of an address, moved by Lord Tyrone, who said it did not pledge him in any manner to support the measure of an Union, Sir John Parnell, who had been dismissed from his office as Chancellor of the Exchequer because he would not pledge himself to support the Union, led the opposition in a manly speech; and Mr. Fitzgerald, who had also been dismissed from the office of Prime Serjeant for the same reason, declared unequivocally his opinion as a lawyer, that "it was not within the moral competence of Parliament to destroy and extinguish itself, and with it the rights and liberties of those who created it."

Mr. George Ponsonby moved an amendment to the address, asserting "the undoubted birthright of the people of Ireland to have a resident and independent legislature, such as was recognised by the British legislature in 1782, and was finally settled at the adjustment of all differences between the two countries." He then boldly declared that, "neither the legislature, nor any power on earth, had a right or authority to annihilate the Irish Parliament."

Barrington, afterwards Sir Jonah, judge of the Admiralty, expressed

himself very warmly against Union :—" Ireland," he declared, " had not fair-play ; the foulest and most unconstitutional means, he believed, had been used to intimidate and to corrupt it. He had good reason," he said, " to believe that corrupt and unconstitutional means had been used by the noble lord (Castlereagh) to individuals of the Irish Parliament." A cry of " order " was raised at this, and a threat was made to take down his words, whereupon Plunket stood up and avowed the same opinions, and his determination to use stronger language ; and so Barrington was allowed to proceed without further interruption.

Plunket again rose soon afterwards, and spoke with eloquent indignation. " The discussion which had taken place," he said, " has, it seems, given great offence to gentlemen on the Treasury Bench ; they are men of nice and punctilious honour, and they will not endure that anything should be said which implies a reflection on their untainted and virgin integrity. They threatened to take down the words of an honourable gentleman who spoke before me, because they conveyed an insinuation ; and I promised them that if the fancy for taking down words continued, I would indulge them in it to the top of their bent. Sir, I am determined to keep my word with them ; and I now will not insinuate, but I will directly assert, that, base and wicked as is the object proposed, the means used to effect it have been more flagitious and abominable. Do you choose to take down my words ? Do you dare me to the proof ? Sir, I had been induced to think that we had at the head of the Executive Government in this country a plain, honest soldier, unaccustomed to and disdaining the intrigues of politics, and who, by an additional evidence of the directness and purity of his views, had chosen for his secretary a simple and honest youth (*ingenui vultus puer ingenuique pudoris*), whose inexperience was the voucher of his innocence ; and yet I will be bold to say, that during the viceroyalty of this unspotted veteran, and during the administration of this unassuming stripling—within these last six weeks—a system of black corruption has been carried on within the walls of the Castle, which would disgrace the annals of the worst period of the history of either country. Do you choose to take down my words ? I need call no witnesses to your bar to prove them. Sir, the noble lord has shown much surprise that he should hear a doubt expressed concerning the competence of Parliament to do this act ; I am sorry that I also must contribute to increase the surprise of the noble lord. If I mistake not, his surprise will be much augmented before this question shall be disposed of ; he shall see and hear what he has never before seen or heard, and be made acquainted with sentiments to which, probably, his heart has been a stranger. Sir, I in the most express terms deny the competency of Parliament to do this act ; I warn you do not dare to lay your hand on the Constitution ; I tell you, that if, circumstanced as you are, you pass this Act, it will be a mere nullity, and that no man in Ireland will be bound to obey it. I make the assertion deliberately ; I repeat it, and I call on any man who hears me to take down my words. You have not been elected for this purpose ; you are appointed to make laws and not legislatures ; you are appointed to act under the Constitution, and not to alter it ; you are appointed to exercise the functions of legislators, and not to transfer them ; and if you do so, your act is a dissolution of the Government ; you resolve society into its original elements, and no man in the land is bound to obey you. Sir, I state doctrines which are not merely founded in the immutable laws of truth and reason ; I state not merely the opinions of the ablest and wisest men who have written on the science

of Government ; but I state the practice of our Constitution, as settled at the era of the Revolution ; and I state the doctrine under which the House of Hanover derives its title to the throne."

Serjeant Ball, whom Barrington, no mean judge, calls the ablest lawyer of his day, followed up what Plunket had stated, in an able and impressive speech. "My opinion is," he declared, "that this Parliament, emanating from the people, elected by them, and sent into this House for the purpose of guarding and defending the Constitution, has no right to subvert it ; has no right to overturn those liberties which they were appointed to defend, or to annihilate that power from whence they derive their own. We sit not here by virtue of any original or inherent privilege of our own ; we are the temporary trustees of delegated power, and any act of ours tending to defeat or betray the trust reposed in us must be inconsistent with the nature of our authority, and cannot be warranted by it ; therefore I do not hesitate to say that if this Parliament should be weak enough to pass an act for the subversion of the Constitution, the Act would be a nullity, and not binding upon the nation. Though we should vote away the Constitution which we are appointed to maintain ; though we should pronounce sentence of death upon those liberties which have been entrusted to our care ; yet that Constitution, being the pre-existing and paramount authority, being the energetic and vivifying principle of our own existence, would survive an impotent vote ; those liberties would still continue to live. I hope they will live for ever. In the opinion I have given, I am only reporting the sentiments expressed by the people in every county in which they have assembled. I am echoing the voice of this very Parliament, when in the year 1782 they demanded a free Constitution, and declared that no power on earth was competent to bind Ireland but a Parliament of its own. I am speaking the voice of the King himself, the common parent of both countries, proclaiming from the throne the compact between the two nations, and declaring that it should be inviolable and irrevocable."

Mr. Knox lamented that "the *accursed measure* had long been the favourite object of that Minister in England, whose wild ambition had already led to the destruction of empires, and which then sought to annihilate that nation. . . . If that fatal measure should ever be carried, that insulted, degraded, debased country would henceforth be made a barrack from whence to draw the means of enslaving Great Britain, and there would be *no resource left to save either country but a revolution.*"

Mr. Hans Hamilton declared that "an Union was a measure he should ever firmly *oppose within the walls with his vote, without them with his life.*"

Mr. Lee gave his opinion as a lawyer, and he staked his character upon it, that the Legislature was not competent to the change they were called upon to make."

Mr. Crookshank said, "I deny that this house has any right, *or is* in anywise competent, without the previous authority of its constituents, to surrender or transfer, by compact or otherwise, that legislative trust, delegated by them for a limited period, and subject to the conditions ascertained by the constitution."

The Right Hon. George Ogle "execrated the principle of the Union, and said he would oppose it in every stage."

Hardy, the friend and biographer of Lord Charlemont, spoke strongly on the question. "Admitting the right of the people to call for a Union, who," he asked, "except the Corporation of Cork had

demanded it. Had Parliament, or either House of Parliament, or any body of men whatever? Just the reverse; the most respectable public bodies, with the City of Dublin, and the law at their head, had remonstrated most strongly against it."

Lord Corry "felt it his duty to deliver his decided disapprobation of the measure as disgraceful to the country, as well as pregnant with every possible mischief to its constitution, commerce, and manufactures."

Mr. Denis B. Daly said "his constituents had given their opinion boldly, like Irishmen, determined to hazard their lives and properties in defence of the independence of their country, and he would venture his life and property in defence of the same in opposition to an Union."

Colonel O'Donnel said, "There is no person in or out of this House who can be more anxious for supporting the closest connexion between England and Ireland than I have been and ever shall be. I have fought to preserve it from being interrupted by external and internal foes; but should the legislative independence of Ireland be voted away by a Parliament which is not competent thereto, *I shall hold myself discharged of my allegiance*. I say, Mr. Speaker, the Constitution will be violated. I will join the people in preserving their rights. I will oppose the rebels in rich clothes with as much energy as I ever have done the rebels in rags."

Mr. James Moore O'Donnel declared that while he had existence he would oppose the Union. "I deny," he said, "that the Constitution is an article to be bargained for; I deny the power of Parliament to barter or dispose of it on any terms, and I publicly assert that should we ever be base enough to do so, the people will have a right to oppose it. For my part, if my opposition to it in this House shall not be successful, I will oppose it in the field."

Mr. Dobbs openly avowed that "though he had hitherto been the warm friend of English connexion, he would meditate separation from her the moment that a legislative Union should be carried by force, whether that force were direct or implied."

Sir Edward O'Brien declared he would oppose the measure of an Union whenever proposed.

Mr. W. B. (afterwards Lord) Ponsonby said he had no hesitation in declaring the very proposal of Union an attack on the Constitution of Ireland, that argued unpardonable temerity; he would therefore oppose it in every form and stage."

Mr. Arthur Moore (subsequently Judge of Common Pleas) said, "I maintain that though Parliament may assume the *power*, it has not the right to change or alter, much less to abrogate altogether, the Constitution of this land, of which they are only the delegated functionaries, and not the exclusive owners; and I maintain that if, by the violent exercise of the *abstract power* of Parliament to do that which its *moral competence* is insufficient to do, the measure of a Union should be carried, against the sense of the people, that in such a case the laws of the incorporated legislature would not bind this island, and that then 'the question of resistance (to use the words of Mr. Fox) would no longer be a question of morality but of prudence;' and, sir, if these be strong doctrines, who has forced them from me? Those who have made this atrocious attack upon the independent Parliament of this land, which I am sworn to defend as part of the existing constitution, in which no man is altogether *sui juris*, but a trustee for the rights of others, whose boast and birthright it is."

Of those who planned this attack on the independence of Ireland, we will notice only one individual here—Lord Castlereagh himself—to show the utter fallacy of the hopes which were held out to the country. “Incorporate with Great Britain,” he said, “and you have a common interest and common means. If Great Britain calls for your subjection, resist it; but if she wish to unite with you on terms of equality it is madness not to accept the offer.” What he and the English Government understood by “terms of equality” it is difficult to conceive, if the cruel legislation of seventy years may be considered as the practical illustration of the gracious sentiments then enunciated. The only equality accomplished between the two nations in all those years of so-called Union was the equality of National Debt and Taxation. There has been neither assimilation of the two peoples, nor identity of interests, nor unity of purpose, nor sympathy of ideas, nor feelings of affection sought to be engendered between them; but on the part of England, an arrogant disregard of Irish wants, and a contemptuous affectation of ignoring Irish wishes; whilst, on the part of the people of Ireland, there has been day by day a growing distrust and disaffection, which not even the tardy disestablishment of the Church, nor the latest attempt at adjusting the Land Question, nor the more lenient policy generally adopted during the last few years, has in any sensible degree tended to diminish. All honour, however, to the high-minded Premier,* who has been the first amongst English rulers to inaugurate a wise and manly system of conciliatory statesmanship, the only drawback to which is, that it has, unfortunately, come many years too late to reconcile Irishmen to any other scheme of legislation now but HOME RULE.

CHAPTER XII.

“Was the Parliament of England competent or qualified to legislate for the Parliament of Ireland? Impossible. Every advantage of situation favoured the one; the other was unfitted for governing, or giving law, by every disadvantage of situation, and every dissimilarity of temper and habit.”—SHERIDAN in English House of Commons.

IN our last chapter, we left Ireland in a ferment at the threatened introduction of the projected measure, for no formal proposal of the Union had yet been made by the Government; although the discussion, which arose out of the moving of the address to the King, and which lasted twenty-two mortal hours without intermission, might really be considered the first Parliamentary debate on the subject. The motion for the address was carried in the afternoon of the 23rd January, 1799, as we have seen, by a majority of *one*, which could scarcely be looked upon as a ministerial triumph, considering that Pitt had privately instructed his agents at the Castle not to introduce the Union unless they were sure of a majority of fifty. Indeed, the result of the division was everywhere accepted as a victory by the anti-Unionists. On the following day, when the address, in Parliamentary parlance, was reported, the debate was resumed with the same earnestness of purpose, and the same determined opposition on the part of the friends of Ireland. The sitting was of about equal duration with that of the preceding one; and, on the division which followed, the Government was beaten by 111 votes against 106, the latter being technically supposed to be Irish representatives; but, in reality, for the most part, the mere nominees of Government supporters, or the hungry expectants of ministerial bounty,

* Mr. Gladstone's speech at Aberdeen was in every way unfortunate, and his bitter pleasantry about the fisheries was an unhappy specimen of lugubrious humour.

When the report was ordered to be read on the 24th of January, Sir Lawrence Parsons (afterwards Lord Rosse) objected to the paragraph which was understood to refer to an Union, as pledging the House under a metaphorical expression to admit the principle of a legislative Union. He reprehended the Government who had selected such a time for the introduction of this "unfortunate measure," and denounced the official supporters who had so long assisted the Minister in resisting the claims of the country. "Yet the independent gentlemen of Ireland," he said, "in despite of all the direct and indirect means which had been employed to pervert them on this occasion, have proved to the nation that their present independent Parliamentary Constitution was dearer to them than their lives, and that it was but with their lives that they would ever surrender it. There is not in the world a more open, warm-hearted, grateful, and unsuspecting people than the people of Ireland. This unfortunate and ill-advised attempt, however, must destroy in them all future confidence towards the Government, as long as it was constituted of those men who on that occasion had been so forward to sacrifice the rights of their country, even though that day should put a complete termination to the fatal project; for they might rest assured it was necessary they should put it down decisively, otherwise that country would continue in a state of ferment and agitation, every day more and more prejudicial to the connexion between the two kingdoms."

So important was considered this speech, and so damaging to the Government plans, that Lord Castlereagh immediately rose to disclaim any desire to re-argue the question so extensively debated on the preceding day, and in a specious manner he urged that the paragraph which was objected to implied nothing more than the readiness of the House to enter into the consideration of such measures as should be most likely to consolidate the strength of the empire, and did not imply that the House was specifically pledged to the measure of an Union. At the same time, he declared that, as he was convinced the measure was one of great and important advantage, "he would never lose sight of it." Ponsonby replied in a spirited manner, taunting the minister with "the unconstitutional arts which he had practised," and with his inability then to pass the measure—thanks to the public virtue and spirit which had appeared in and out of Parliament—"no thanks, however, to the noble lord for not pushing it now; for he could not carry it."

Mr. Edgeworth, a name familiar in Irish literature, avowed that, "when first the measure of an Union was mentioned, he was friendly to it; but, when he found the sense of the nation against it, he changed his determination."

An animated debate then ensued, in which the same arguments were used on both sides, as had been urged the day before; the Ministerialists talking grandly but vaguely of the benefits that were sure to follow, especially to the hitherto oppressed Catholics, who were thus made use of to deceive and ensnare some of the so-called leaders of that body, and those who sympathised with them; whilst the anti-Unionists, flushed with the hope of defeating the Minister, vehemently reiterated all the legal and constitutional objections against the passing of such a measure. When the result of the debate became known, the joy of the nation knew no bounds. Printed lists of the voters were circulated amongst the people, "in order that they might know their glorious defenders, that every honest man might engrave their names

and their services on his heart, and hand them down to his children's children ;" whilst those who had voted for the Union were publicly hooted, and everywhere treated with the utmost derision and contempt.

So sanguine of success, however, had been the British Minister that, without waiting to learn the result of the discussion in Ireland, he had actually introduced into the two Houses of Parliament in England, on 22nd January, a message from the King recommending an Union. In the Lords there was no opposition ; but Sheridan in the Commons made a vigorous stand for the legislative independence of his native land. Indeed, the high-spirited and patriotic conduct of Sheridan, in all the lengthened and disheartening debates which followed on this question, should make his memory ever dear to Irishmen, although unhappily all his brilliant fame as " the dramatist, orator, minstrel, who ran through each mode of the lyre, and was master of all," is associated only with the glory and greatness of England.

When the address in reply to the King's message was moved in the English House of Commons, Sheridan said " he conceived it incumbent on Ministers, before they proposed the discussion of a plan of Union, to offer some explanations with regard to the failure of the last solemn adjustment between the countries, which had been generally deemed final. There was the stronger reason to expect this mode of proceeding when the declaration of the Irish Parliament in 1782 was recollected. The British Legislature having acquiesced in this declaration, no other basis of connexion ought to be adopted. The people of Ireland, who cherished the pleasing remembrances of that period when independence came upon them as it were by surprise, when the genius of freedom rested on their island, would come to this second adjustment with a temper which would argue not tranquillity, but disquietude ; not prosperity, but calamity ; not the suppression of treason, but the extension and increase of plots to multiply and ensanguine its horrors." How prophetically true was this of the attitude of Ireland towards England since 1800, and of the constant state of ill-suppressed disaffection in which her people have been seething ever since, is written in letters of blood. The unfortunate insurrection of Emmett in 1803, the abortive attempt of Smith O'Brien in 1848, and the multiplied Fenian and other conspiracies of later years, exhibit Ireland before the whole world as in a chronic state of rebellion against the English Government, and the widespread discontent and disaffection of the people remain to this day a standing protest against the cruel, illegal, and unconstitutional acts by which her power of self-government was corruptly and forcibly taken away. In justice to Sheridan's memory, here is another passage from his speech on the same occasion, which should never be forgotten : " There were topics," he said, " on which silence would be unworthy of the majesty of truth, and his country had claims upon him, which he was not more proud to acknowledge than ready to liquidate to the full measure of his ability." But there is much in the wise, noble and patriotic speech which he uttered in that debate that deserves to be recorded and re-echoed even after the lapse of twenty-two years. His predictions of 1799 are the truths of 1872. " To order an incorporate Union in any respect a desirable measure," said this illustrious Irishman to the English Parliament of that day, " the sense of the nation ought to be freely manifested in favour of it ; but there was no prospect of obtaining such a concurrence, and an Union carried by surprise, by intrigue, by fraud, corruption, or intimidation,

would leave both countries, with regard to permanency of connexion, in a situation worse than the present. . . . If by such acts they deprived Ireland of the power of resisting any claims made upon her, if thus they wrung from her her independence ; if thus they intimidated and corrupted her Parliament to surrender the people to a foreign jurisdiction, he would not justify the Irish in a future insurrection, but he would say that the alleged grounds for it would wear a very different complexion from the late." Again, he went on to say, "To the period of the last solemn adjustment, the great impolicy and heinous injustice of the British Government towards Ireland for 300 years is notorious and avowed." Truly, the man who had the pluck to utter such sentiments, in the face of the English Parliament of that day, had the spirit of a martyr and the courage of a hero ; and his last hours deserved the tribute of a nation's gratitude, instead of the niggardly pittance, doled out by a prince's hand, which was contemptuously rejected as it deserved. He then asks, "Is it reasonable to suppose that a country, the object of such insult for three centuries, when at last she had wrung from our tardy justice that independence which she had a right to claim, and had obtained commercial advantages should, only sixteen years afterwards, so far forget all prejudices, as to surrender the means by which she acquired those advantages—would this be the case if the free sense of the country were manifested?"

Again, he asks, what the advocates of Home Rule after the bitter experience of seventy years ask with increased force and the unanswerable logic of results, "Was the Parliament of England competent or qualified to legislate for the Parliament of Ireland? Impossible. Every advantage of situation favoured the one ; the other was unfitted for governing or giving law, by every disadvantage of situation, and every dissimilarity of temper and habit. Lord Chancellor Clare said that the English Parliament was less acquainted with the state of Ireland than any other body of men in the world. How then was the Parliament of England better fitted to legislate for Irishmen than that of Ireland with its experience." Here spoke the sagacious statesman and the true patriot, and well would it have been for England, better still for Ireland, and best of all for the empire, if his wise counsel had been listened to and followed. The amendment which he then proposed, however, was of course defeated, because it has always been the blind policy of English rulers to suppose that whatever system they choose to adopt towards Ireland must be the best, because it is English, and must therefore be carried at all hazards, and in spite of all opposition from those who are made the victims ; forgetting or wilfully ignoring the fact that the character of an old nation cannot be changed by Act of Parliament, and that the natural instincts of race will inevitably triumph in the end. The traditions, habits, and aspirations of an ancient high-spirited people, of such distinctive characteristics as the Irish, are not so easily extinguished as some have idly hoped and imagined to be possible ; and the now universally admitted failure of English domination, cruelly exercised for 300 years to subdue and destroy Irish nationality, is the best commentary on this question, and, at the same time, the strongest condemnation of those who would still blindly adhere to the vicious and exploded system of the past.

Of course, when the question was put to the English House of Commons, Sheridan's amendment was rejected, and the Address voted. In the meantime, however, the Minister received the news from Ireland of Castlereagh's defeat ; and when Pitt again brought forward the

project of Union on the 31st January, he thought it prudent to be more plausible. In that patronising strain, half-chiding half-forbearing, which is sometimes adopted towards mettlesome children, he graciously condescended to say, "That the Parliament of that kingdom had the right and the power of rejecting a proposition of that nature he did not presume to deny; yet, convinced as he was that the measure would not only tend to the general benefit of the empire of Great Britain, but would particularly increase the prosperity and ensure the safety of Ireland, he deeply lamented the unfavourable reception of the scheme in the Irish House of Commons. But if the British Parliament should be inclined to favour the scheme, he would propose that its opinion should remain recorded as a determination by which it would abide, leaving to the dispassionate judgment of the legislature of Ireland, the future adoption or rejection of the plan." He then drew a highly-coloured picture of the commercial and political advantages that were sure to follow, and of the "common interest" which Great Britain had always felt in the safety of Ireland, and he threw out artful hints in abundance about the danger of granting "full concessions to the Catholics" *until* this wonderful metamorphosis had taken place. A greater mockery of constitutional forms is not on record in history than this pretended appeal to the "dispassionate judgment" of the Irish Parliament, when it is beyond controversy that Castlereagh immediately set in motion his wicked machinery of corruption, scattering his lavish bribes on all sides to buy up the members with unstinted hand. Three commissioners were appointed for bribing members (under the name of compensation for the loss of their seats, and patronage). Dr. Duigenan, Lord Annesly, and Mr. Jameson, distributed by Lord Castlereagh's appointment and authority *a million and a-half* sterling amongst Lords and Commons. Members sold their seats, retiring in favour of some small official or nominee of the Castle, and the price of a single vote was familiarly known. It was £8,000 in money or a civil or military appointment to the value of £2,000 per annum; whilst some were dexterous enough to get the money as well as the appointments, and in more than one instance those who were bold enough to drive a sturdy bargain with the Minister received as much as £15,000. Peerages were sold, and the money applied for purchasing seats in the House of Commons. Chief-Justice Bushe said: "The basest corruption and artifice were exerted to promote the Union; the worst passions of the human heart were entered into the service; and all the most depraved ingenuity of the human intellect was tortured to devise new contrivances of fraud." Obscure barristers, without any knowledge of law, were foisted on to the Bench of Justice; and even the sacred lawn of the Episcopate was made a commodity of barter; whilst the minor creatures of corruption were taken in swarms, and sent to feed and fatten on the land. And, as regards the "full concessions to the Catholics," artfully held out and dangled before their vision by Pitt, the hypocrisy of the Minister and his satellites is written in the painful struggles of thirty years for that Emancipation which was finally forced from England at the threat of Civil War.

CHAPTER XIII.

“The right of being subject only to such laws to which men have given their own consent, s so inherent to all mankind, and founded on such immutable laws of nature and reason, that it is not to be aliened or given up by anybody of men whatsoever.”—MOLYNEUX—Case of Ireland stated.

ALTHOUGH it is not our intention to pursue into minute detail the various debates which finally resulted in the overthrow of Ireland's legislative independence, it may be instructive to dwell a little longer on the struggle which took place, and to note down briefly what were the sentiments, on this question of the Union, of some of the best and wisest statesmen of that generation of gifted men. The record will at least serve to show that, if England, as she has always done in her proceedings towards Ireland, doggedly maintained, and arbitrarily carried out, in spite of all argument and opposition, the high-handed policy on which she had set her heart, there were not wanting the most ample warnings of that retribution which has since followed her in every transaction of her history, and which may one day—we pray Heaven to avert it long—work her own downfall.

Again and again did Sheridan, with unflagging pertinacity, and with an eloquent zeal that was worthy of the cause, and worthy, too, of a better fate, return to the contest against the Minister in the English House of Commons. When Pitt, on 31st January, 1799, moved his resolutions embracing the general plan of the Union, after a speech in which he put forth all his oratorical powers, Sheridan at once rose to “warn the House against being led away by the seductive force of the Minister's speech. The fate of the question when it was lately agitated in Ireland might reasonably induce him to desist from the prosecution of the scheme; but as he had solemnly pledged himself for the exertion of his most strenuous efforts to produce an Union of the two kingdoms, it might be apprehended that he would pursue his course in defiance of every obstacle, would make use of artifice to gain his point, flatter and delude the Irish, and, by seeming to respect their declared opinion, lull them into inactivity, the more completely to subjugate them to slavery.” He reproached Canning for pleading the cause of bold and bare-faced corruption, and censured as wanton and unnecessary Pitt's pledge for the prosecution of his favourite measure. He animadverted on the conduct of the Court in the dispute respecting the Catholics. A Lord-Lieutenant (Earl Fitzwilliam) had been sent to that kingdom to allay animosities and gratify the great bulk of the nation. The cup of concession was presented to their lips, but, when they were on the point of tasting, it was dashed in their faces, and the new viceroy was recalled. As regards the adjustment of 1782, he maintained that it was intended to be final as to the Constitution of Ireland; but he admitted that some regulations, chiefly commercial, were to have been proposed for the improvement of the connexion between the kingdoms. He then proposed two resolutions, which speak for themselves:—“That no measures can have a tendency to improve and perpetuate the ties of amity and connexion between Great Britain and Ireland which have not for their basis the manifest, fair, and free consent and approbation of the parliaments of the two countries; and that whoever shall endeavour to obtain the appearance of such consent and approbation in either country, by employing the influence of Government for the purpose of corruption or intimidation, is an enemy to his Majesty and to the Constitution.”

Pitt, of course, protested against the resolutions; but Mr. (afterwards Lord) Grey supported them, maintaining that they would "serve as pledges for the honourable intentions of the British Government, and allay the jealousy of the Irish nation. He considered the question brought forward by the Minister as the most momentous that had ever been submitted to the deliberation of Parliament, either in point of constitutional right, or of public policy; but, as one of the parties whose consent was necessary had declared against it, he recommended a suspension of the scheme. He was earnestly desirous of the prevalence of the most cordial harmony, of the establishment of an effective Union; not an union of parliaments, but of hearts, of affections and interests, of vigour, of ardour, of zeal for the general welfare. The scheme then offered seemed to be of a very different tendency. It threatened discontent, jealousy, and distrust."

Read by the light of subsequent events, these sentiments not only deserve the credit due to prophecy fulfilled, but should also be received with peculiar force as warnings for us and for the future. In the same strain, too, Dr. Lawrence "conjured the House to relinquish a discussion which might be productive of serious mischief while so high a degree of irritation pervaded the public mind in Ireland. The measure," he said, "was not necessary at the present moment, even if it promised to be more beneficial than he had reason to think it would be. The settlement of 1782, according to the opinion of Mr. Burke, was to every constitutional purpose, final and conclusive, although the mercantile concerns of the two countries might acquire some further arrangements."

Another of the parliamentary celebrities of that day, Mr. Tierney, raised his voice on behalf of Ireland. "He was surprised," he said, "that Ministers should have proposed an Union to the English Parliament without having been previously assured of the consent of the Irish Legislature; but he was still more astonished, and even alarmed at their present perseverance, after the strong disapprobation of the measure in Ireland. He was among those who doubted the competency of the Hibernian Parliament on this occasion, as a delegated body could not be justified in surrendering the trust reposed in it by the people." All was in vain, however; Pitt's resolutions were carried. But in the course of the following month, the Minister having moved the order of the day for the House going into Committee for the further consideration of his Majesty's Message, Sheridan once more came forward to do battle on behalf of his country in this unequal contest. As a substitute for Union, he recommended the abolition of all disabilities which had been incurred in civil affairs on account of religious distinctions, and which abolition, he was of opinion, would tend more to the improvement of the connexion between Great Britain and Ireland than the measure brought forward. This motion being also rejected, a fresh debate arose when Pitt moved that the Speaker should leave the chair. General Fitzpatrick, a thorough anti-Unionist, who had acted as secretary to the Duke of Portland (when Viceroy) asserted, "from his own knowledge of the views of the Cabinet in 1782, the constitutional finality of the compact which was then adjusted, and completed in the following year. An incorporate Union," he added, "from its tendency to a subversion of that settlement, deserved, in his opinion, the severest censure. What security would the Irish have for the continuance of any promised advantages? How would a minority be able to enforce the execution of the terms? In every case of rivalry, British superiority would overwhelm the interests of Ireland."

In another division which subsequently took place, Mr. Hobhouse “strongly opposed the measure: first, because it was obnoxious to a great majority of the people of Ireland; next, he doubted the competency of the Irish Parliament to its adoption; then, he urged that a resident Legislature would be better qualified than a remote Parliament to remove the internal evils of the country.”

That this has been the increasing conviction of all who value the British connection, as well as those who do not, experience has demonstrated with growing accumulation of force from year to year; and, if it were not for the unfortunate religious dissensions which have so long divided the people of Ireland, and which, like the hounds of Actæon, have turned on and devoured herself, there can scarcely be a doubt that an united nation might long since have wrung from England’s weakness—which has always been so stimulating to her sense of justice—that recognition of Irish rights which she may ultimately have to concede to her fears. Even now, if the Presbyterian North would lay aside its bitterness, and unite heart and hand with the Catholic South for the weal of their common country, and if the Anglo-Irish of the Pale would turn, as did the Geraldines of old, towards the Celtic tribes of the West, a day of resurrection might soon dawn on old Erin, such as some of her early saints saw in prophetic vision, and her bards have handed down from generation to generation in those plaintive strains which have wrung tears of sympathy and admiration from friend and foe.

But to return. All opposition at this side of the water was fruitless. The English House of Commons servilely followed the Minister, because it gratified the national vanity to bring Ireland into helpless subjection once more, and because it destroyed, as the commercial interests desired, all prospect of Irish trade ever again interfering with English prosperity.

In Ireland, however, it was hoped that, after the defeat of Lord Castlereagh, the project would be abandoned altogether; and the rejoicings were consequently loud and universal. Public addresses of thanks and congratulation were voted to Mr. Foster, the Speaker, and to several other prominent members who had strenuously opposed the measure. As the Irish Secretary knew full well that, with the means which he had at his command, and the determination of unscrupulously using them to the uttermost, time was on his side, he moved on 28th January for an adjournment, in order to receive the report of the proceedings in England. Sir John Parnell opposed the motion with much spirit, as he said there never was a moment in which it was more necessary for the Parliament of Ireland to remain vigilant at his post. Barington likewise warmly opposed the adjournment, and inveighed against the speech of the British Minister. “There was not a man,” he said, “within either nation more zealously attached in loyalty to his king and Government than himself, nor who would sacrifice more cheerfully to the maintenance of both; but if the honour and the dignity of the Irish Parliament were to be again entrapped by an attempt to press upon them the odious measure of an Union, against which that House had already contended with so much spirit, virtue, and honest indignation, he declared that he for one would go every length to oppose it, in every shape and in all its ramifications.”

Sir John Freke, in reply to a member who stated he had been told that the people of the County Cork were in favour of the measure declared that he had that day received letters from some of the most respectable and best-informed gentlemen in that province assuring him

that, had the vote in the previous debate passed in favour of Union, the whole province would have been next day in open rebellion.

Colonel Bagnell also stated that he had received letters from several of the best-informed gentlemen of Tipperary, and so had his colleague, declaring the whole country to a man decidedly adverse to the measure of an Union. Plunket likewise spoke strongly on this occasion; and Lord Castlereagh deemed it prudent to close the discussion by saying that, with respect to the question of Union, he had already declared his determination explicitly, "that he should never bring it forward so long as it appeared to him repugnant to the sense of Parliament and the country"—a notable specimen of the hypocrisy of the wretch whom Byron stigmatised, with such just indignation, as "Carrotid-artery-cutting Castlereagh"—a title, in respect to which we may here, *par parenthèse*, express an individual sentiment, that the poignancy of our grief at his having deserved such an epithet is only augmented by the regret that he had not earned it more than twenty years before.

When the Parliament adjourned, the Viceroy, with the aid of the Castle, set every engine to work to gain over proselytes. By the aid of a lavish expenditure of money, and a free distribution of patronage, it is little to be wondered at that this "corrupt minister and his corrupt phalanx" demoralised the public mind, and that his bribes converted many whom his arguments failed to convince. Everywhere, however, a strong opposition was experienced, and he soon found that the majority of the nation was hostile to the scheme of Union. As he saw that the national sentiment could not be extinguished by a deceitful show of flimsy arguments, which were repudiated wherever the voice of the people could be heard, it became all the more evident, therefore, that it was necessary to convert the Council-Chamber of the Castle into a market-place for political hucksters; and that a set of scheming adventurers, contrary to all law and constitutional doctrine, should be induced to sell that which no Minister, except a patron of fraud and profligacy, had any right to buy. The title-deeds of the estate were indeed sold; but the vendors were only faithless trustees, who basely bartered what they had no power to part with; and, in all justice and equity, the rightful claims of the true owners—the Irish people—are still in force, and will one day be re-established.

CHAPTER XIV.

"That Ireland should be bound by Acts of Parliament made in England is against reason and the common rights of all mankind.—MOLYNEUX.

As it became evident that a vital struggle between the adherents of the English Government, on one side, and the real representatives of the Irish people, on the other, was now imminent, every engine of power was set in motion to influence persons of position and authority in favour of the Union, and to neutralise the adverse sentiments of the great mass of the people, who had everywhere joined in denouncing the odious measure. Whilst Castlereagh and his abominable crew were employed in bribing, corrupting, and intimidating those who were open to such influences, lord Cornwallis, the Viceroy, appealed personally and by letter to all those whose support he deemed it prudent to solicit. It is not much to be wondered at that such applications prevailed in overcoming the repugnance of many who would otherwise have

opposed the project; but there were still some men of independent minds, who could not be wheedled, or seduced, or bought over to the side of an unscrupulous administration. Amongst others, the aged Lord Rokeby, in reply to the Lord-Lieutenant, wrote a powerful letter, "as a Briton and Englishman," in direct opposition to the proposed measure. And when the question was again introduced in the British House of Peers, Earl Fitzwilliam said he "deemed the agitation of it unseasonable. It would tend to inflame dissensions, and impair the strength and vigour of the empire. The House had the experience of ages, that the dangers apprehended from a separate legislature had not arisen. It was then to be considered whether this were the proper time for an Union. On the part of Great Britain he would say, Do you wish to introduce into the British Parliament the rebellion of Ireland? Do you wish to introduce the representatives of Ireland—representatives elected by the free electors of Ireland? Oh, no, no; but by British bayonets." In this debate also that great and good man, that noble wise, and honest statesman, exposed the duplicity of the Government with regard to the question of Catholic Emancipation which led to his untimely, and, for Ireland, most unfortunate recall. He then stated upon his honour that, "though he had agreed to assume the Government of Ireland on the understanding that he was not to bring forward the question of Emancipation on the part of the Government, he had entered his protest against resisting it, should it be brought forward from any other quarter, and that he had made most distinct declarations that, in case of its being so brought forward, it should receive his full support. With these declarations he had assumed the Government of Ireland." Such an admission was too inconvenient to the English Minister to be allowed to pass, and accordingly Lord Grenville professed to have "no recollection of the circumstances," and coolly asked for the production of papers on the subject, knowing well that the protest, although made in his own presence, was a verbal one: but any excuse was deemed good enough, at that time, to serve the purpose of a Minister in carrying out his Irish policy.

Lord Rawdon (Earl of Moira) declared that "no one would more heartily concur in the proposed measure than himself, if it should meet the approbation of the greater part of the Irish community; but, as it had excited general disgust and vigorous opposition, he was convinced of the danger of prosecuting the scheme. Even if the Irish Parliament should be disposed to adopt it, the disinclination of the people ought to have been deemed a sufficient ground for relinquishing it; otherwise we might no Irish in delusive security a secret fire, which might ultimately consume the vitals of the empire." Lord Darnley also gave his voice for suspending the scheme, and Lord Holland, "though he did not consider the adjustment of 1782 as a bar to a new agreement, disapproved the proposal of an Union at a time when it excited strong disgust in that kingdom.

The Minister's proposition, however, was carried, and subsequently a conference was held between the two Houses of Parliament in England, when it was proposed by the Lords that a joint Address to the Throne should be presented by both. A fresh discussion of the Union, however, took place on 22nd of April in the Commons, when Pitt moved that they should join in the Address voted by the Peers; but this was ultimately carried, after some strenuous but fruitless opposition on the part of Sir Francis Burdett, Lord William Russell, General Fitzpatrick, and others. The address, which was presented in due form to the king,

included the following paragraph, which reads like a cruel mockery, a bitter, heartless satire in the face of the system of Imperial legislation adopted by England towards Ireland for seventy years afterwards: "We entertain a firm persuasion that a complete and entire Union between Great Britain and Ireland, founded on equal and liberal principles, on the similarity of laws, constitution, and government, and on a sense of mutual interests and affections, by promoting the security, wealth, and commerce of the respective kingdoms, and by allaying the distractions which have unhappily prevailed in Ireland, must afford fresh means of opposing at all times an effectual resistance to the destructive projects of our foreign and domestic enemies, and must tend to confirm and augment the stability, power, and resources of the empire."

Thus was Ireland sacrificed to gratify the national ambition and jealousy of Englishmen, who flattered themselves that they were advancing their own selfish interests, while talking grandly of securing the glory and greatness of "the empire," and who, therefore, paid little heed to the angry feelings of wounded pride, which were sure to be engendered in the hearts of Irishmen, and which have become more and more embittered every succeeding year, as it has become more and more evident that the hopes then held out, in regard to Ireland, were fallacious, and the promises illusory.

In the discussion on the Regency Bill, which was introduced on 11th April, 1799, by the Right Hon. James Fitzgerald (late Prime Serjeant) for the purpose of fixing the regency in the same individual in Ireland as in England, Foster, the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, raised the whole question of the Union once more in an unanswerable speech. "The pretences," he said, "for a legislative Union were ill supported. The risk of a disagreement on the subject of peace or war, or with regard to foreign treaties, would not justify the adoption of a measure so unconstitutional. The case of regency afforded the only apparent foundation of alarm; but the Bill now under consideration would remove all apprehension on the head." There are some who still make use of the same arguments, as he combated, against granting Home Rule to Ireland; but the matured opinions of such a constitutional authority are still incontrovertible. "The arguments adduced for an Union of the two legislatures were," he said, "equally applicable to the Union of the two Houses of either Parliament. These might disagree, and ought, by parity of reasoning, to be formed into one assembly. Where would then be our Constitution? It would yield to Monarchical or Republican despotism. The balancing principle composed the chief excellence of our Constitution; and why might not the two legislatures, guarded by one head, perform national and imperial functions in a better and more efficacious manner than a combined Parliament." If unanswerable argument, powerful reasoning, and the most lucid exposition of constitutional law and government, sustained by a lofty spirit of true patriotism, could save a country, the luminous speech which Foster delivered on this occasion would not have been in vain. After asserting, in the strongest manner, the incompetency of Parliament to surrender their legislative powers, he made a stirring appeal to Irishmen of all creeds and classes. He said: "Your country is in danger; a desperate attempt is on foot to seduce you to surrender the independence of your Parliament. You are all natives of the same island; interested in its trade, its property, its freedom, and in all the blessings of a glorious and happy Constitution; bounden by every tie of duty to yourselves, your country, and your posterity to preserve it, join

all hands and hearts together, bring the vessel into port, forget all family differences, all local or partial jealousies, and save Ireland, save your country. Tell the bold Minister who wants to take away your Constitution that he shall not have it, that you will not be his dupe; that you love Britain as a brother; but you will be his brother, not his dependant; and that you will not degrade yourselves from an independent kingdom to an abject colony." Would to Heaven that these noble words might sink deep into the hearts of Irishmen to-day; and that every creed, every party, every social rank and distinction in the land might lay aside all political differences, and offer up the mutual sacrifice of patriotism on the altar of their common country.

The Bill, which at first seemed to meet with approval, was ultimately postponed, and finally lost for the session. It was about this time, as Plowden observes, that began "the very singular system of members shifting their seats in Parliament according to their various feelings and sentiments, and in some instances according to the most unaccountable modes of squaring their honours and consciences on this critical and important measure. It would be both false and stupid to deny that the whole powers of Government, patronage, influence, and emolument, were now devoted to proselytising for the Union." And an angry debate took place about the same time in the Irish House on the question of issuing a writ, to enable a supporter of Government to take the place of a member who had retired. Mr. Arthur Moore (afterwards Judge of Common Pleas) observed that he did not conceive how ministers could justify such a partial and unfair exercise of the prerogative of the crown, unless they were determined openly and broadly to confess and declare (that which every day's events rendered useless for them longer to conceal) that they were resolved to carry the measure of Union by any and by every means, and to use all the engines and influences of power, and the insidious practices of fraud and unfair dealing to bring about its completion. Sir, there is no man who is an attentive observer of public occurrences, and who keeps an eye on the conduct of the administration, who must not have seen, and seen with affliction, that the measures which have been taken, and were now in daily and unremitting practice, to effectuate the Union, were such as no honest man could justify, and which, while they stamped the authors of them with indelible disgrace, must render the incorporation of the legislatures of the two countries, if carried, impermanent, and the discontents and calamities of that nation eternal."

On this occasion Plunket also spoke with trenchant force and bitterness. "The question," he said, "had been brought into that house accompanied by the execration of the people of Ireland, but at the same time with the proud boast and childish hope, on the part of the noble Lord (Castlereagh), that it would be carried by a triumphant majority. It was dismissed and defeated by the instinct, and the reason, and the virtue, and the talents, and the prosperity of the country." "At first, the noble lord professed that no man should be allowed to vacate unless he gave satisfactory assurance that his seat was not to be sold. He stated it as a fact, and desired to be contradicted if it were not so, that the noble lord had totally abandoned that principle, which he admitted was a fair and honourable one. He stated it as a fact that, since he made that profession, he had allowed seats to be vacated, where he knew that money was to be given by the successor, and that he had refused permission to vacate, where he knew that no money was to be given. He stated it as a fact, that it was publicly avowed by Govern-

ment that voting or not voting for the Union was the sole rule by which the permission to vacate should be regulated. Would any man after that be so senseless as to believe that Government wished for the fair sense of the Parliament or of the people? Would they deny that they had purchased the newspapers to admit publications only on one side? Would they deny that they had instructed sheriffs to prevent the sense of the counties being collected by the convening of county meetings? Were they ready now to have the counties of Ireland convened, and to abide the test of their declarations on the question? It was notorious that the power of Government had been strained in every corner of the kingdom to prevent the sense of the people from being declared. He was informed that their emissaries had actually descended so low as to threaten a publican in the City of Cork that his license should be withdrawn if he ventured to receive into his house a number of gentlemen who afterwards affixed their name to an address, thanking the Parliament for having rejected the Union."

But the ministers succeeded in putting an end to further debate by forcing an adjournment; and little more was done in Parliament for the remainder of that session. In the interim, the myrmidons of Government were not idle. Ireland was dishonoured by the introduction of the foulest system of bribery; and no expense was spared in the wicked efforts to stifle the natural voice of the country. Many of the members sold their seats, by retiring in favour of the nominees of the administration; and when the last Parliament of Ireland opened on 15th January, 1800, several of the former anti-Unionists were "conspicuous by their absence"—Castlereagh having gained, by purchases and changes in the representation, not less than forty-three votes from the opposition. But there reappeared on the scene, on this memorable occasion, one whose name alone was a magic talisman to conjure up the spirit of patriotism; whose glowing eloquence was once more to stir the soul of Ireland to its depths, and make the hearts of her enemies quake with fear; one who had, eighteen years before, mainly contributed to raise his country out of the slough of subjection, and who now came to shed, by his genius and his virtues, a lustre over her fall; who had watched, as he pathetically said, over the cradle of Irish independence, and now came to follow her hearse to the grave. But the re-entry of the illustrious Grattan into that house which had so often before reverberated to the applause of listening senates, who had been kindled into enthusiasm by the fire of his burning words, must form the subject of a fresh chapter,

CHAPTER XV.

"She hears the ocean protesting against separation, but she hears the sea likewise protesting against Union."—GRATTAN.

THE circumstances attending Grattan's return to the Irish House of Commons, on the morning of the 16th January, 1800, form an episode in the history of that memorable epoch which may well demand a special notice at our hands. Parliament was opened on the 15th by the Viceroy, with a long speech from the Throne, which artfully omitted any allusion whatever to the subject of the Union. When the usual address had been moved and seconded by two embroidered State lacqueys, Sir

Lawrence Parsons (afterwards Lord Rosse) directed the clerk to read the speeches which had been delivered by Lord Cornwallis at the opening and closing of the previous Session. He then observed that "when at the close of the last Session a recommendation on the subject of Union had been made from the Throne, but all deliberation on the Message had been prevented by a sudden prorogation, and the Speech just delivered had studiously avoided all mention of the measure, was there a man in the House who did not know the reason? The measure had been fully and fairly rejected last Session. The Minister waited now to get if possible a packed Parliament to deprive Ireland of her ancient constitution. This was a plain, undeniable, flagrant fact. He would not, he said, blame the Minister for urging a measure which he might think beneficial to the country, but he should do it in a fair, free, and uncontaminated manner. This was not the case here. Means were employed to carry the measure, which, even if it were of advantage to the country, would pollute all the benefits it could produce. The great charge against James II. was attempting to pack a Parliament. What did Ministers do now? Prostituting the prerogative of the Crown, by appointing men to places so as to pack a Parliament. The measure of an Union had been rejected last Session; it had been condemned by the voice of the nation, and now he was preparing to bring it forward anew at a time when the country was covered with armies; when martial law was predominant; at the very moment when a formidable invasion was preparing against this country; when apprehensions prevail from without and within; where the free exercise of the public mind is by these circumstances precluded." Sir Lawrence then moved an amendment to the Address, declaring that "His Majesty's Kingdom of Ireland is inseparably united with Great Britain, and that the sentiments, wishes, and real interests of all his subjects are that it should continue so united in the enjoyment of a free constitution, in the support and dignity of his Majesty's crown, and in the advancement of the welfare of the whole empire; which blessings we owe to the spirited exertions of an independent resident Parliament."

This amendment was seconded by Mr. Savage, who declared that the decided sentiment of the great and populous county of Down, which he represented, was against "the baneful measure of an Union." The debate which followed was one of the most brilliant and exciting in the annals of a Parliament that was the frequent theatre of exhibitions of that native oratory for which Ireland was then so distinguished. Every man seemed to be inspired by the loftiest sentiments of patriotism; and the speeches delivered throughout that long night and far on into the following morning surpassed, if possible, in talent, and energy, and fervid enthusiasm, any that had ever before been heard, even within the walls of that eloquent assembly. Our extracts, however, must be of the briefest. Lord Cole said his "constituents had agreed with him in reprobating the measure, and the artifices used to procure support for it had confirmed him in his opposition. He would oppose it while he had life." The Right Hon. George Ogle did not imagine that, after the sense of the House had been so clearly ascertained on the subject, the Irish Minister would have been bold enough to introduce, or the British Minister wicked enough to persevere in the Union. "My opposition to it," he added, "does not flow from any party or faction. I think it is a measure fraught with every ill to Ireland and Great Britain." The Right Hon. James Fitzgerald, who had been Prime Ser-

jeant, said they had little reason to expect that the increasing population of four millions of people would respect the compact, if entered into, as sacred—"They will be told that the country was called upon to this compact when martial law was in full force. They will hear of the years 1779 and 1782. They will inquire how they lost the great acquisition of those days—a free, residing, superintending legislature. They will inquire by what means they lost national independence, and much I fear that dazzled by the splendour, without the loyalty and moderation of 1782, similar claims may be made, and Great Britain may not be found in a similar disposition to concede. My soul aches to think with what ease confusion in that gap may enter, and by the one country take the other."

Mr. Charles Kendal Bushe, afterwards Lord Chief Justice, spoke thus;—"I strip this formidable measure of all its pretences and its aggravations; I look at it nakedly and abstractedly, and I see nothing in it but one question—*Will you give up your country?* I forget for a moment the unprincipled means by which it has been promoted; I pass for an instant the unseasonable moment in which it was introduced, and the contempt of Parliament upon which it is bottomed, and I look upon it simply as England reclaiming, in a moment of your weakness, that dominion which you extorted from her in a moment of your virtue; a dominion which she uniformly abused, which invariably oppressed and impoverished you, and from the cessation of which you date all your prosperity. It is a measure which goes to degrade the country by saying it is unworthy to govern itself, and to stultify the Parliament by saying it is incapable of governing the country. It is the revival of the odious and absurd title of conquest; it is the renewal of the abominable distinction between mother country and colony which lost America. It is the denial of the rights of nature to a great nation, from an intolerance of its prosperity;" and then, reviewing what had been done for Ireland by her domestic legislature, in an elevated strain of argumentative eloquence, he asks the pertinent question, "Can this be supplied in Westminster?" the reply to which he furnishes in the further question—"Could a Committee of this House make a road in Yorkshire?" and the answer which he then gave supplies the amplest and most irrefragable argument to the advocate of Home Rule at this very hour;—"No, nothing can supply the place of a resident Parliament, watching over national improvement, seizing opportunities, encouraging manufactures, commerce, science, education, and agriculture; applying instant remedy to instant mischief, mixing with the constituent body, catching the sentiment of the public mind, reflecting public opinion, acting upon its impulse, and regulating its excess."

Let the cringing supporters of successful power talk as they please, we take our stand upon what is here laid down by this great ornament of the judicial office, of whom Grattan said that "he spoke with the lips of an angel," and respecting whom Brougham, in a splendid panegyric on his chaste and classic eloquence, declared that "the breath of calumny had never tarnished the purity of his judicial character during the twenty years that he presided on the Bench." And we repeat that Ireland never can be happy, or peaceful, or prosperous, without the guidance, and the abiding influence of a domestic legislature.

Mr. J. M. O'Donnell offered, if any inquiry were granted, to prove at the bar of the House the corruption which had been practised for destroying the constitution. "I oppose the measure," he said, "because I know the foul means which have been made use of to carry

it into effect, and because there is no power vested in us to hand over to another country the constitution, the laws, and the liberties of Ireland." Of Arthur Moore's opinions on the Union we have had ample evidence already, but his testimony on this occasion is so strong that it is well worth quoting here. "I cannot refrain," he declared, "from calling the attention of the House to the *wicked and unconstitutional means* which have been resorted to in order to impose upon the country, to destroy the Parliament, and to overturn the constitution ; means, many of which are in my power to prove at that bar, and all of which are universally known, and almost openly avowed."

Plunket delivered a masterly speech, from which we take one or two extracts. After exposing the contumely with which the proposal of an Union had been rejected in the preceding session, he indignantly asks—"Has the measure changed its nature, or the Minister his objects, or the countries their relations ? No : you shall know the changes which have taken place. I will unmask the men who have dared to come into the midst of Parliament and people to pamper their liberties by sordid bribery, and to subdue their spirits by lawless force ; and if I cannot excite the feelings of honour or virtue in their hearts, I will call the blooming blush of shame into their cheeks." Again he says—"I will not admit the principle, because it is a barter of liberty for money, even supposing your advantages as real as they are visionary. The nation which enters into such a traffic is besotted." He then reviews all that had passed in 1782, and scornfully reproaches the Minister for dishonouring the royal word and the faith of both parliaments which he had solemnly pledged, and for violating that treaty of final adjustment between the two countries; the truth and sincerity of which the Almighty had been invoked to witness. Then he continues :—"Thus ended that never-to-be-forgotten session. What has since been done ? During the whole interval between the sessions the same barefaced system of parliamentary corruption has been pursued. Dismissals, promotions, threats, promises. You held out hopes to the Catholic body, which were never intended to be gratified ; regardless of the disappointment and indignation, and eventual rebellion which you might kindle ; regardless of everything, provided the present paltry little object were obtained. In the same breath you held out professions to the Protestant, equally delusive." After contemptuously describing the provincial tour of the Viceroy to gain support, he asks, "Will you dare to act on a majority so obtained ? Fatal will be your councils, and disastrous your fate, if you resolve to do so. You have adopted the extremes of the despot and the revolutionist. You have essayed every means to corrupt the parliament to sell their country ; you have exhausted the whole patronage of the Crown in execution of that system ; and to crown all, you openly avow, and it is notoriously a part of your plan, that the constitution of Ireland is to be purchased for a stipulated sum. I state a fact for which, if untrue, I deserve serious reprehension. I state it as a fact, which you cannot dare to deny, that £15,000 a piece is to be given to certain individuals as the price for their surrendering—what ? Their property ? No : but the rights of representation of the people of Ireland ; and you will then proceed in this, or in any Imperial Parliament, to lay taxes on the wretched natives of this land to pay the purchase of their own slavery."

Other men of lesser note, but equally decided in their opposition, followed on the same side throughout the stormy hours of that fatal night ; but still the debate went on with unflagging spirit on both sides

till about seven o'clock on the morning of the 16th, when a cry arose that Grattan was coming. He had only just been elected for Wicklow, before midnight, the writ having been purposely withheld by Castlereagh till the last moment; and now, by the urgent importunities of friends, who deemed the fate of Ireland doomed without his aid, he came, feeble and emaciated, from the bed of sickness to plead the cause of his country. Leaning languidly on the arms of his friends, Ponsonby and Moore, he moved slowly to the table, while all the members rose simultaneously, and, taking the accustomed oaths, he essayed to speak; but finding himself unable to address the House standing, he requested permission to do so seated. This being immediately acceded to, he proceeded, amidst an anxious and solemn silence, and with painful emotion on the part of the listeners, to deliver one of the most memorable of those speeches which have linked his name with the great original orators of history, and which Ireland may well feel pride in handing down from generation to generation as amongst the most precious heirlooms of her glory. One who sat near him says: "Never did a speech make a more affecting impression; but it came too late. Fate had decreed the fall of Ireland, and her patriot came only to witness her overthrow. For two hours he recapitulated all the pledges that England had made and had broken; he went through the great events from 1780 to 1800, and proved the more than treachery which had been practised towards the Irish people."

We have little heart here to break up and pick out fragments of that splendid masterpiece of eloquence, which is, happily, accessible now to all; but our sketch would be incomplete and even more inadequate than we feel it to be, if we did not interweave into our narrative of that eventful era some extracts from the inspired declamation, the philosophic range of thought, the high-toned language of patriotism, and the epigrammatic force of diction, which are so eminently characteristic of this greatest, and wisest, and purest of Ireland's illustrious men. This is what he who mainly carried the constitution of 1782, and who could best testify as to the purpose and meaning of that international compact; here is what he states: "He (the Minister) denies in the face of the two nations a public fact registered and recorded; he disclaims the final adjustment of 1782, and he tells you that this was no more than an incipient train of negotiation. The settlement of which I speak consists of several parts, every part a record, establishing on the whole two grand positions—first, the admission of Ireland's claim to be legislated for by no other Parliament than that of Ireland. Secondly, the finality imposed upon the two nations regarding all constitutional projects affecting each other." After reciting what passed between the two parliaments, he proceeds: "The case is still stronger against him; finality was the principal object of his country, as legislative independence was the object of ours. Ireland wished to seize the moment of her strength for the establishment of her liberties; the Court of England wished to conclude the operations of that strength and bind its progress. The one country wished to establish her liberty, the other to check the growth of demand. I say the "growth of demand;" it was the expression of the time. The Court of England came therefore to an agreement with this country, namely, to establish for ever the free and independent existence of the Irish Parliament, and to preserve for ever the unity of the empire." Replying to the assertion of Pitt in the English House of Commons, 'You abolished one constitution but you forgot to form another,' he showed unanswerably what Ireland had effected under her

new constitution, and he continued : " The classic Minister must know, Tacitus has told him, that between the powerful and the impotent there can be no peace ; the powers I speak of were the powers of peace ; they were the powers of protection ; they were the great reserves of the Irish Parliament to secure the trade of Ireland and the honour of the empire. Strange ideas this Minister entertains of the constitution of an Irish Parliament. It should be incompetent, it should be omnipotent : incompetent to regulate the commerce of the country, omnipotent to give away her constitution ; it finds its omnipotence in his mind when it abdicates its trust." He then disposed of the miserable argument about the Regency question ; and replies by anticipation to the paltry objections raised by some opponents of Home Rule at the present day on the subject of war. " The Minister proceeds ; he states a second instance, that of war. Here again the fact is against him ; the Parliaments of Ireland have, ever since their emancipation, concurred with England on the subject of war ; but they have concurred with this remarkable difference that, before their emancipation their concurrence was barren, and since their emancipation it has been productive. He thinks he foresees that the Parliament of Ireland may dissent from that of Great Britain on the subject of war. He knows that peace and war are in the department of the king, not of Parliament ; he knows that on a proclamation by his Majesty, Ireland is in a state of war, of course, and without the assent of the Houses of Parliament ; he knows that the supply of war depends, not on the Parliament of Ireland, but of Great Britain ; and, therefore, the interference of the Parliament of Ireland on that subject, is little more than the declaration of a sentiment. For the preservation of her constitution she is interested in British wars. She considers the British Empire a great western barrier against invasion from other countries. She hears the ocean, protesting against separation, but she hears the sea likewise, protesting against union ; she follows, therefore, her physical destination, and obeys the dispensations of Providence, when she protests, like that sea, against the two situations, both equally unnatural, separation and union." This argument is as true and conclusive to-day as it was seventy-two years ago : nay, it has acquired accumulated force in an increasing ratio of bitter experience from year to year, ever since. Let us inlay our narrative with another of those priceless gems of parliamentary history. " Let us consider," Grattan said, " what the British Parliament has been, and let us compare that Parliament, for this purpose, with the legislature of Ireland. In this comparison I do not mean to approve of all the parliaments that have sat in Ireland. I left the former Parliament because I condemned its proceedings ; but I argue not like the Minister from the misconduct of one Parliament against the being of Parliament itself. I value that parliamentary constitution by the average of its benefits, ; and I affirm that the blessings procured by the Irish Parliament in the last twenty years are greater than all the blessings afforded by British Parliaments to Ireland for the last century ; greater than all the blessings procured by those Parliaments for their own country within that period. Within that time the legislature of England lost an empire, and the legislature of Ireland recovered a constitution." But our space, unfortunately, obliges us to bring these extracts to a close. When Grattan concluded his speech, Castlereagh set up one of his subordinates to make a miserable attack on the orator, but the House grew impatient ; a division was loudly called for ; and the fate of Ireland was sealed. The Minister carried his motion for

adjournment, which was tantamount to a defeat of the anti-Unionists, by a majority of forty-two. This majority he was enabled to maintain throughout the subsequent debates; and in June, the atrocious Act of Union was carried, in spite of the protest of the Duke of Leinster, and several of the leading peers of Ireland; in spite of the opposition of Grattan, Plunket, and all the real parliamentary representatives of the country, and in spite of the execrations of the great mass of the people of Ireland.

CHAPTER XVI.

“The time is at hand, the spirit is gone forth, the declaration is planted; and, though great men should apostatize, yet the cause will live; and though the public speaker should die, yet the immortal fire shall outlast the organ which conveyed it; and the breath of liberty, like the word of the holy man, will not die with the prophet, but survive him.”—GRATTAN.

IN our introductory remarks, we expressed a belief that, if the truth-loving, injustice-hating people of England were ever made thoroughly conscious of the circumstances under which, and the means by which, the Act of Union was carried, they would disavow the whole iniquity in the face of the world, and set themselves strenuously to undo its evil consequences by demanding the total and absolute repeal of such an odious enactment. We have endeavoured to perform our task to the best of our humble ability. We have traced, so far as our limits would admit, the gradual rise of Irish legislative independence from its first faint glimmerings in the sad and gloomy times of William III. and his narrow-minded successor, Anne, to that bright dawn under George III, when Ireland seemed to have reached the promised land of freedom under the guidance of her wise and gifted prophet—ever glorious Grattan—in 1782 :

“That ONE lucid interval snatch’d from the gloom
And the madness of ages, when, filled with his soul,
A nation o’erleaped the dark bounds of her doom,
And for ONE sacred instant, touch’d liberty’s gao!”

We have shown the retrogressive steps by which England went back again, after the lapse of eighteen years, from her plighted national faith, and forcibly suppressed by the foulest treachery and the most flagrant acts of corruption and intimidation, in violation of all law and constitutional right, the domestic Parliament of Ireland, and thereby extinguished her power and capacity as a nation. Whether the object which we have held steadily in view has been attained, and whether the hopes which we have entertained from the sense of honour and justice on the part of England are only visionary, and whether our anticipations of a restoration to Ireland of her legislative independence shall ever be fulfilled, must now lie with the future. Before the curtain falls, however, and the writer makes his respectful bow, and final exit, we would briefly review the position of the two countries, and, discussing the subject of the real question at issue, endeavour, if we can, to “point the moral,” although, it may be, we have utterly failed, to “adorn the tale.”

Has Ireland, then, ever accepted, acknowledged, or submitted to the Union in good will and loyalty to the English Government? It would be a mockery to say so. All the great constitutional lawyers, from Saurin to Plunket, told the British Minister, when he proposed the Union, that

it was a "violation of every moral principle;" that it "would not be obligatory on conscience;" that "the Act would be a nullity, and not binding upon the nation;" and that it was "a mere question of prudence whether it should not be resisted by force."

Every man who could be supposed to represent the feeling of Ireland raised his voice against the measure; and some of the most respectable men in Parliament openly avowed in the House that, if the Act were passed into law, they would hold themselves "discharged of their allegiance." The only persons who could be considered the representatives of Irish opinions and Irish wishes, gave the Union their most strenuous opposition, and fought against it to the last. Their ultimate defeat, brought about by the most unconstitutional means, by fraud, bribery, and intimidation, was no abdication or renunciation of the nation's rights. Those rights, like the title deeds to an estate, treacherously sold by dishonest trustees, still exist, and only wait to be reclaimed at the proper time, and under all the necessary conditions for ensuring success. The Bill is nearly due.

Amongst the leading statesmen of England who were opposed to the measure, we may here take the opportunity of recording the sentiments of Fox, whose opinion we have not previously quoted. His opponents, it would appear, had represented that he was favourable to the Union, and, in consequence, at a meeting of the Whig Club, in 1800, he publicly declared that "his opinions had been misrepresented, particularly on the Union. It was the most arrogant of all pretensions to pretend that we can legislate for Ireland—that we should understand all her local interests better than herself, and feel a more lively anxiety in promoting them. The sovereignty of the people is the fundamental principle of all well-constituted States. It is unnecessary to say more than to compare this principle with the Union in order to discover the injustice of the measure." Has the experience of seventy years tended to reconcile the people of Ireland to this "atrocious enactment," by proving the capability or the willingness of an English Parliament, sitting 300 miles away, to understand Irish questions and meet the urgency of Irish wants? Assuredly not. The position of the government in Ireland at the present moment is the strongest answer to this question. Even the Ministry of Mr. Gladstone, the best that Ireland has ever had from England, and which has done most to wipe out the iniquities of the past, finds itself confronted on every hustings by popular odium, and a growing distrust and impatience of English domination which are the embodiment of the national spirit of the country. The "Irish difficulty," instead of being appeased by small concessions, delayed too long, like the Church Act and the Land Bill, rises into larger proportions year by year. Ireland is no longer the abject dependancy it was in the old days, when Whig and Tory, whichever happened to be in power, ruled it as they pleased. And England, too, is no longer what she was when her Plenipotentiary at the Congress of Vienna decided the fate of empires. The altered appliances of war, and the political revolutions on the Continent during the last few years, have affected her relations towards the other States of Europe, without improving her prestige, or magnifying her chances in any great struggle which may be impending amongst the nations of the world. Even now, her enemies are exulting in the thought that the present imbroglio with the United States may end by crippling her resources or damaging her reputation—perhaps by diminishing her power as a nation. Is it wise at such a time, with Ireland, disaffected to the core, and even the best friends of

the connexion between the two countries, amongst whom we are proud to be enrolled, afraid of her being unequal to the emergency—is it wise, we repeat, to hang back and temporise on this vital question of Education; which now demands a solution that shall be prompt, complete, and satisfactory to the Catholic Hierarchy and people of Ireland?

Judging from the past, and from some recent manifestoes of the English Protestant Press, we should suppose that the present discussions of the Cabinet on this subject are mainly concerned with the difficulty of effecting such a compromise as will make the smallest possible concession to Irish Catholicity, whilst yielding the largest amount of satisfaction and complacency to English prejudices and bigoted sectarian intolerance. A great opportunity presents itself to the Prime Minister for winning to his side the sympathies of bishops, priests, and laity. Will he be equal to the occasion? Catholic Ireland demands, in unmistakeable tones and plain language, Catholic education for her people, and a Catholic University for her gentry. Will the First Lord of the Treasury, whatever may be his own private dispositions, be enabled to whip up his party to the accomplishment of such a feat and one so worthy of the highest efforts of a great statesman? We are afraid not; although we do not wish to be prophets of evil. But our fear arises from the belief that it is not within the competency, or in the nature of an English Parliament, with an overwhelming majority of Protestants and Protestant Dissenters—all united in one common sentiment in regard to Catholicity—to legislate for Catholic Ireland according to the plain, simple, but urgent needs of the time.

And why should Ireland have to submit to all this heartburning, when she demands the commonest rights of a nation, after seventy-two years of this precious Union? Who is there will venture to say that, if an Irish Parliament were sitting in Dublin, subject to popular influences, and sympathising with the wishes of the people, there would be any difficulty or hesitation in granting such wise and urgent concessions as would satisfy the national spirit, win the affections of the people to revere the laws and uphold the Constitution, and establish British connexion on such a solid and lasting basis as would give strength, security, and stability to the Empire?

The writers, who cry out that “Home Rule” means “separation,” speak from their insular prejudices, and their ignorance of Irish aims and wants—if, indeed, they do not purposely mislead the public judgment, in order to avoid the disagreeable duty of acknowledging a great legislative error, and, by consequence, of repairing that error by another great act of national right and justice.

The idea of Home Rule, it is true, may be supported by many, both in and out of Ireland, who bear no love to England, and who would probably rejoice to see her proud ensign lowered on land and sea; but this is an accidental circumstance mainly due to English arrogance and haughty selfishness. The demand for a domestic parliament, to legislate in Ireland for Irish affairs, springs from the heart of a whole people, in whom loyalty to the throne is inculcated as a principle of duty, and not merely encouraged as a sentiment of option. The sovereign of England is absolutely, and, from the actual necessity of the case, must be sovereign of Ireland also; and there never was a moment, in the long connexion of the countries, when a stronger tie of affection, loyalty, and gratitude united Ireland to her Imperial sister than in that brief but glorious period when England freely and generously conceded the principle, and ratified the fact that, “no other power on earth had

any right to make law, to bind the country but the king, lords, and commons of Ireland."

Why should it not be so again? Why should the question of making Ireland peaceable and contented be deferred or evaded because of some possible contingency that might hereafter arise? There is no real difficulty in the case, which an honest minister, who had made up his mind to an act of great statesmanship, might not, with the aid of a clever lawyer, provide against within the four corners of a single bill. The "hitch" about the regency, in the time of George III., was mainly owing to the intrigues of English parties, as Sheridan avowed, and might be got over at once by such a simple measure as that of Prime Sergeant Fitzgerald's bill, which was nearly carried in the Irish Parliament in 1799.

The question of war need present no insuperable difficulty to a prudent Government. There will always be differences of opinion amongst statesmen about going to war with other nations. Some of the best and most enlightened minds of England were opposed to the American and French wars of the last century; and, moreover, it is not by votes in Parliament that this country ever declares war. Ireland, being under the same sovereignty as Ireland, would be bound by the act of the Crown in such a case. Indeed, this question, as we showed in our last chapter, was anticipated by Grattan, and by him answered so conclusively as to satisfy the keenest susceptibilities of Imperial rule. As Earl Fitzwilliam said, in the English House of Peers, "the house had the experience of ages, that the dangers apprehended from a separate legislature had not arisen." The problem remains, then, for some great English statesman to solve, whether he will keep England weak and powerless, because her right arm, Ireland, has to be held down for fear of being raised against herself; or whether he will boldly consolidate the Empire, by making Ireland loyal and happy, in the enjoyment of HOME RULE.

THE END

